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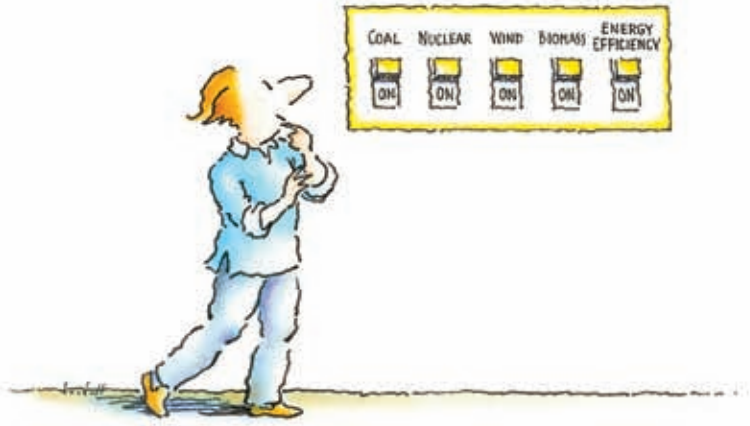

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Bust a Cap

For years, most Democrats and environmentalists have been in rough agreement about how to tackle global warming. Set an overall limit on carbon-dioxide emissions, let polluters buy and sell permits, and watch the market work its magic. Both Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton campaigned on this idea, and the House passed a climate bill last year centered on an economy-wide cap. Sure, experts might have quibbled over the fine print, but the basic framework was pretty straightforward.

But, all of a sudden, right as the Senate is set to take up energy legislation, climate advocates are scrambling for a Plan B. The problem is that a big cap-and-trade program can't get 60 votes in the Senate—not after its lone Republican backer, Lindsey Graham, bailed on the idea in April. And so, as Harry Reid's office tries to cobble together an energy bill, green groups are searching for a fallback plan that can at least make some headway in curbing carbon pollution—and in steering the country away from its fossil-fueled status quo.

The hot idea of the moment is to design a cap that would apply solely to electric utilities. At first glance, the logic seems sound: Power plants emit 40 percent of the country's carbon pollution, and many utilities would welcome a cap, if only for the regulatory certainty they need to start making investments again. Yet there's no guarantee that even a scaled-down cap can get 60 votes—the Republican base has whipped itself into such a frenzy over the term "cap-and-trade" that moderates are scared of anything bearing even a passing resemblance. Worse, the deals needed to pass a utility-only cap could do more harm than good. In exchange for their support, utility executives are asking for an exemption from a host of Clean Air Act rules, including those on toxic pollutants like mercury and sulfur dioxide.

That would be a terrible trade-off from an environmental perspective. Smog-forming pollutants like sulfur dioxide cause thousands of premature deaths each year—it makes no sense to trade one air-quality problem for another. What's more, those existing Clean Air Act rules may actually be more useful for tackling climate change than a weak utility-only cap would be. After years of dithering under the Bush administration, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is finally starting to enforce air-quality regulations, which will likely force utilities to shut down their oldest, creakiest coal-fired plants. Many of these plants were grandfathered in under the original Clean Air Act and have been spewing enormous amounts of carbon dioxide into the air ever since. A flimsy cap, by contrast, could allow these plants to keep running—if, say, utilities bought carbon offsets instead of making reductions.

The heavy focus on cap-and-trade is in danger of obscuring the fact that there are other crucial components of a strong energy bill—all of which will require careful attention. Reid's bill, for instance, will contain a provision that requires power companies to get a certain portion of their electricity from renewable energy—that is, solar, wind, hydropower, or biomass. In the absence of a true price on carbon, this is a decent way of nudging the country toward cleaner sources of power (and replacing those scuttled coal plants). Yet the renewable standard passed by the Senate Energy Committee last year is unacceptably weak—its targets are so meager and riddled with loopholes that it would do less to promote clean energy than what individual states are already doing. Environmentalists are just now realizing that a robust renewable standard needs to be a major priority if cap-and-trade talks collapse.

Then, there's energy efficiency—the great solution to global warming that almost no one talks about. A recent McKinsey study found that the country could cut 17 percent of its emissions by 2020—the goal Obama pledged at Copenhagen—and save money, simply by rooting out energy waste. There are a slew of ideas the Senate can adopt along these lines, from stricter building codes to Senator Jeff Merkley's bill to reduce U.S. oil consumption by 8.3 billion barrels per day by 2030 through tighter fuel-economy rules, electric-vehicle deployment, and a reduction in heating-oil use. Such proposals could add up to significant carbon savings—but only if Democrats focus on making sure these provisions are as tough as possible.

To be clear, if Congress does not enact strong climate legislation, this will count as an enormous failure. Intransigent senators like Ben Nelson who oppose a cap on carbon—yet offer no suggestions on how to avert an ecological catastrophe—are being grossly irresponsible. But, for now, those Democrats who *do* care about this looming crisis need to remember that the GOP will almost certainly gain seats in Congress next year. This may be the last chance for years to put the country on a saner, cleaner energy course. A strong energy-only bill, combined with EPA regulations, may not be the ideal way to tackle climate change, but it's better than nothing at all. ◆

Zina Saunders

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Present Danger

Bill Kristol unwittingly joins the left's campaign against Israel.

JONATHAN CHAIT

Neoconservatism long ago ceased to have any meaningful ideological difference with just plain old conservatism. Perhaps the one remaining vestigial trait of the ideological tendency is a mania for forming committees and stuffing them with progenies (of both the ideological and the literal sort). The glory days of neoconservatism in the 1970s revolved around such committees as the Committee on the Present Danger and the Coalition for a Democratic Majority. Numerous such committees have followed—the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, the Committee for the Free World, the Project for a New American Century, the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq. Many of them have at least one Kristol or Podhoretz. Last week saw the formation of the latest such group: the Emergency Committee for Israel, whose board consists of Bill Kristol, son of noted neoconservative Irving Kristol; Gary Bauer, a Christian Right activist, Kristol sidekick, and regular on such committees; and Rachel Abrams, stepdaughter of Norman Podhoretz.

The emergency that has instigated the Emergency Committee for Israel—other than the always-urgent need to create more sources of employment for new generations of Podhoretzes, Kristols, and henchmen thereto—is the Obama administration. The committee views the Obama administration, as Bauer puts it, as "the most anti-Israel administration in the history of the United States."

In fact, it is the policy of "the most anti-Israel administration in the history of the United States" to provide Israel with $3 billion in annual foreign aid along with diplomatic support, deployed most recently when the United States declined to condemn Israel's response to the Gaza flotilla. This would seem to make Obama more pro-Israel than, at the very least, Lyndon Johnson, who took a neutral stance when Israel faced potential annihilation in 1967, and Dwight Eisenhower, who condemned Israel's 1956 joint raid with Britain and France on the Suez Canal.

Obama, meanwhile, has actually increased military aid to, and cooperation with, Israel, including an anti-missile defense system. On this matter, Obama has actually taken a more pro-Israel position than George W. Bush. A senior Israeli official recently told *The Washington Post*, "in many ways the cooperation has been extended and perhaps enhanced in different areas."

Now, it is true that diplomatic relations between the two countries have worsened noticeably under Obama. Part of the chill results from Obama's inability to communicate any genuine affinity for, or understanding of, Zionism to Israelis. But a large share of it results from one of the most right-wing governments in the history of Israel, which seems bent upon national suicide in general and the purposeful alienation of the state's few allies in particular. Last year, Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon responded to an actual provocation—Turkey refused to condemn anti-Semitic propaganda on its airwaves—by subjecting the ambassador to a bizarre, televised humiliation, pointing out the absence of a Turkish flag and noting that his guest was seated in a lower chair. The same government proceeded, less flamboyantly, to humiliate Joe Biden on what was intended to be a conciliatory trip to Israel in March.

The combination of the Netanyahu government's incompetent diplomacy, enthusiasm for settlement construction, and lack of enthusiasm for peace negotiation suggests, at least to me, the need for Israel's friends to warn it away from the cliff. The Emergency Committee for Israel not only disagrees with the particulars of this assessment, but also seems to regard the notion of Israeli error as a conceptual impossibility. Committee spokesman Michael Goldfarb—also a lobbyist and adviser to Sarah Palin—says, "ECI is for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship and a strong, secure Israel at peace with the Palestinians and all its neighbors—but Israel is a democratic ally that must determine for itself the best way to achieve this goal." This formulation allows for no possibility, even theoretically, that Israel could bear more than zero percent of the responsibility for the failure of peace.

The fact that the committee considers Obama the most anti-Israel president ever betrays the lack of imagination in right-wing Zionist circles. In the minds of the neoconservatives, a president who maintains the U.S.-Israel alliance while scolding a reprobate government for its excesses is as bad as things can get. They seem not to consider the possibility that a future American president might abandon the alliance altogether.

The intellectual groundwork is being laid. Left-wing critics of Israel portray supporters of the U.S.-Israel alliance as "Likudnik" or "neoconservative." The tactic here is to frame support for Israel as incompatible with liberalism, in order to define opposition to Israel as a core liberal value. They define support for Israel as the neocons do: It means unconditional support for Israel, utter indifference to the Palestinians, at least tacit support for settlements. In reality, it is possible to sympathize with Israel in general while opposing its excesses, to believe that the most fundamental obstacle to peace is Palestinian refusal to accept the existence of a Jewish state, and that Israeli actions like the settlements and the excessive strictness of the Gaza blockade contribute to the problem.

The neoconservatives are the inadvertent allies of the left-wing critics. They, too, define support for Israel in maximalist terms, as something incompatible with liberalism. It is a pincer attack on liberal Zionism.

Israelis themselves have long feared such a dynamic taking hold. Earlier this year, Israeli officials pleaded with Republicans not to turn support for their country into a partisan issue. The subtlety of this dynamic clearly escapes the neocons, whose process of strategic thought on any political question, domestic or foreign, begins with "identify the bad guys" and ends with "attack the bad guys," with no steps in between.

The neocons confidently believe they can force pro-Israel Democrats to embrace their maximalist vision. The ECI, writes an excited Jennifer Rubin in *Commentary*, presents "ostensibly pro-Israel lawmakers [with] the dilemma: partisan loyalty or full-throated support for Israel." What a brilliant idea—force Democrats who sympathize with Israel to choose between their party and the Likud Party. The neocons really can't imagine how such brinksmanship could produce a result they don't want. They never do. ◆

TRB
From Washington

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By JOEL KIRKLAND of ClimateWire
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Afghanistan: WHAT'S NEXT?

Photographs by Chad Hunt

Losing Faith

LEON WIESELTIER

In the analysis of a war, the where matters as much as the why. About the reasons for our war in Afghanistan, I am still solid. I am confident that the United States has an urgent interest of national security in suppressing or destroying Al Qaeda and its various affiliates in the badlands of the Hindu Kush. I am also confident that, but for our efforts to cripple them, these forces would be further along in their murderous plans for America and Americans. I remember September 11. And I have no philosophical or political problem with our second objective in Afghanistan, the collateral humanitarianism of liberating the place from the medieval death grip of the Taliban.

But I am losing faith in our war. I am tired of hearing that failure is not an option and that we are in this to win. Failure is *always* an option and a war is not a football game. I am tired also of the capital's messianic expectations of General Petraeus: The search for a miracle-worker is an admission that it will take a miracle. But what really rattles my confidence in this war is the where. Recently I read Petraeus's counterinsurgency manual. It is a work of genuine intellectual sophistication. It describes a conflict between two forces: an insurgency—"an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government"—and a counterinsurgency—"military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency … and sustain the established or emerging government." The arresting thing about this military manual is that it denies the centrality of the military means to the strategic end. "Armed Forces cannot succeed in COIN [counterinsurgency] alone." Quite the contrary. "Cultural knowledge is essential to waging a successful counterinsurgency." And "political factors have primacy in COIN." Here is the heart of the matter: "U.S. forces committed to a COIN effort are there to assist a HN [host-nation] government. The long-term goal is to leave a government able to stand by itself. In the end, the host nation has to win on its own."

I do not doubt the wisdom of all this: the recognition of the indigenous and autonomous character of peoples, the candidly anti-imperialist spirit. (Interventionism and imperialism are decidedly not the same thing.) But these days it looks to me like a warrant not for hope

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but for despair. For in truth there are not two, but three, forces in this conflict: the insurgency, the counterinsurgency, and the country in which the struggle between them is taking place. As Petraeus says, what will determine the outcome is the host nation. But behold this host nation! I am losing faith in the war in Afghanistan because I am losing faith in Afghanistan. Perhaps there is good news about the HN that is not getting out, but a lot of bad news about it certainly is. I do not see that Afghanistan is either a ready nation or a ready state. (Compared to Afghanistan, Iraq is Sausalito.) The national government in Kabul—the stipulated beneficiary of COIN, in theory and in practice—is local and weak and corrupt and, in its regional strategy, cynical. The political culture of the country seems determined almost entirely by tribal, ethnic, religious, cultural, and geographical factors. The civic means recommended by our war doctrine would appear to involve nothing less than the renovation of an entire society and its encrusted patterns of power and influence. The United States cannot accomplish this, and Afghanistan does not seem to want it accomplished. All the consensus in the world at the highest levels of American government will not alter this fact, if a fact it is. In counterinsurgency warfare, we are in their hands. It is foolhardy to make our security contingent upon the creation of a wholly new order for another people.

Air pollution could kill roughly 3,000 people in Kabul annually.
SOURCE: *Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health*

The bright new idea—the strange child of the cunning of Karzai and the complexity of Petraeus—is that we negotiate with the Taliban. Many knowledgeable people think that this will work. I imagine that some of the Taliban's ranks may indeed be persuaded or bribed or protected away, but I am not inclined to give the Taliban the benefit of any doubt. They will negotiate with Kabul, and maybe even with Washington, only as a step on their march back to Kabul. Like all millenarian movements, their salvific conception of themselves demands the attainment of political power. And so I believe that the Taliban must be fought. But it must be fought by the people whom it aspires to oppress—and those people seem to want us to fight it for them. They complain, rightly, about Bush's indifference and Obama's impatience, but they have not yet risen up together, in a larger union, historically, with a widespread belief in the possibility of a new Afghanistan, to stamp out the fiends in their midst. If Afghanistan has often been the graveyard of empires, it has often been also the graveyard of itself—at least from the standpoint of the liberalization that we seek as the condition of security. Are we supposed to support the Afghans or invent them? The promotion of democracy, which deserves to be rehabilitated in American foreign policy, requires a plausible object. The pace of the "Afghanization" of the war, the dawning of self-reliance, has been discouragingly sluggish. Henry Kissinger, in a sharp dissent (perish the thought) from the president's policy in *The Washington Post* last month, proposed that we conceive of our counterinsurgency not nationally but provincially, and operate not above but within the internal divisions of the country, and seek local victories that add up. This means the abandonment of the focus on the central government that is the essence of the Petraeus doctrine. For the purpose of turning back the Taliban—but certainly not for the purpose of a democratic Afghanistan—this might work. I don't know. But in the provinces, too, the Afghans seem narrowly self-interested and afraid. Their fear is perfectly understandable, but *it is their country*.

After September 11, the Bush administration adopted the "root causes" analysis of terrorism that the American right once despised, and the war in Afghanistan was the implementation of that analysis. The new COIN doctrine is an amplification of it. I agree that there is the problem of terrorists and the problem of terrorism, and that the destruction of terrorists is not the destruction of terrorism. But security cannot wait upon peace, even if peace is the surest form of security. Biden may have been correct: Our security may require no more of us than a relentless drone war, occasionally supported by special operations, against the groups and the planners who threaten us. Most of those enemies are anyway in Pakistan, and in Yemen and Somalia. Let us use force, but let us use it where it will work. I confess that such realism nauseates me, because I would be ashamed for my country to abandon the people of Afghanistan, the women especially, to their once and future theocratic hell. But if Afghanistan does not significantly resist that darkness for itself—"on its own," in Petraeus's haunting words—its people will vanish into it anyway. For as long as Afghanistan will be ambiguous, our war will be ambiguous. ◆

Keeping Promises

PETER BERGEN

ONE TRUISM of counterinsurgency is that securing and winning over the population are the keys to success. So, what do the people of Afghanistan want? In December, ABC and the BBC conducted nationwide polling and discovered that one-third of Afghans said that poverty and unemployment were the biggest challenges confronting them. Another third named rising insecurity and violence. Meanwhile, relatively few Afghans were preoccupied by those issues that many Americans deem to be Afghanistan's greatest problems. Only 14 percent of respondents said corruption and feckless government were the leading concerns, while a mere 2 percent selected the drug trade and the influence of foreigners. When asked to name the biggest danger in the country, around 70 percent of respondents chose the Taliban. The lesson flowing from all of this is that the United States must provide the kind of stability and prosperity that it promised Afghans after the overthrow of the Taliban.

On April 17, 2002, President George W. Bush spoke at the Virginia Military Institute, where General George C. Marshall had studied a century earlier. In his speech, he seemed to pledge some kind of Marshall Plan for Afghanistan. But no such outpouring of assistance ever came. Per capita U.S. aid to Bosnians following the end of the Balkan war in the mid-'90s was nearly 30 times that received by Afghans in the two years after the fall of the Taliban. Between 2001 and 2009, U.S. reconstruction and humanitarian aid hovered around an average of $1.75 billion annually—about

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$58 per Afghan per year. Ambassador James Dobbins, the Bush administration's first envoy to the new Afghan government, has rightly observed that "the American administration's early aversion to nation building" meant there was "low input" and, therefore, "low output," which resulted in "low levels of security and economic growth."

Nor have Afghans seen much for the approximately $36 billion in reconstruction aid that has flowed to their country since 2001. Many of these funds have been consumed by the various international organizations whose four-wheel drives clog the streets of Kabul. A 2008 report by the British charity Oxfam found that around 40 percent of aid to Afghanistan was funneled to donor countries to maintain home offices in the West and pay for Western-style salaries, benefits, and vacations. Another study found that less than 20 percent of international aid ended up being spent on local Afghan projects. Afghanistan remains one of the world's poorest nations, on par with such basket cases as Somalia.

The United States could improve this state of affairs quite swiftly—certainly before the July 2011 deadline for some form of U.S. military drawdown. After years of war, there is no shortage of vital infrastructure in need of building or repairing. Focusing on several high-profile projects would provide much-needed jobs, establish the foundations needed for a functioning economy, and give Afghans a reason to resist the overtures of the insurgents. The most urgent, obvious task is to secure the Kabul-to-Kandahar highway, the most important road in the country, economically and politically. Under the Taliban, this route was pitted with giant potholes that could swallow cars whole. It was rebuilt as a blacktopped freeway by 2004, and, at that time, was the only large-scale reconstruction project to be completed since the U.S. invasion. Just two years later, the security situation had deteriorated so precipitously that to drive on the road without substantial security backup was a suicide mission. It remains so today.

Taking back this highway from the Taliban and the brigands who plague it would bring broad economic benefits, increasing commerce between northern and southern Afghanistan and enabling more trade between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. And it would send an important message. Five years ago, in Iraq, American soldiers took control of "Route Irish," the key artery connecting Baghdad International Airport with

CHAD HUNT

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downtown Baghdad that had become a nightmarish obstacle course of suicide bombers and IEDs. Making Route Irish safe to travel again signaled that order would prevail in Iraq—and eased access to the country for those international companies and countries engaged in the reconstruction effort.

The second major priority is to finish the work on the massive Kajaki Dam in southern Afghanistan, which will eventually provide electricity to some two million Afghans. (Only 15 percent of Afghans have electricity in their homes.) Work on the dam has been plagued by inexcusable delays for years. (Incoming American commander David Petraeus will likely focus on this type of project.)

Getting more Afghans to work could be accomplished by a Works Progress Administration program similar to the one instituted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression. Around 35 percent of Afghans are unemployed, despite their country's desperate need to build new roads and dams and repair agricultural aqueducts destroyed by years of war. Yet the manual labor for major projects such as rebuilding the Kabul-to-Jalalabad road has been performed by imported Chinese laborers. This practice must end.

The Taliban may have imposed a brutal theocratic rule on its citizens, cloistered half the population, bankrupted the country, and provided a safe haven to pretty much every jihadist terrorist and insurgent group around. But it was also the only government in the past three decades to provide Afghans with that most important public good: security.

Those who are urging the United States to reduce its presence in Afghanistan over the next year or two often argue that foreign forces are a bacillus that the Afghan body politic is sure to reject. But, according to the ABC/BBC poll, only 4 percent of Afghans view the United States as the greatest danger to their country—while 62 percent support the presence of international soldiers in Afghanistan. This suggests that the way out of Afghanistan is not to dramatically ramp down the American presence anytime soon.

In Afghanistan, there are two doctors for every 10,000 people.

Source: World Health Organization

Another frequent criticism of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan is that the effort to secure the country is futile as long as Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and other allied jihadist groups continue to enjoy a safe haven in Pakistan's tribal regions. But to use this argument as a justification for withdrawal overlooks the most important strategic shift that has occurred since September 11: The Pakistani public, government, and military have largely turned on the militant groups they once supported.

Where the Taliban once enjoyed something of a religious Robin Hood image among ordinary Pakistanis, they are now increasingly seen as thugs. That is because, in recent years, jihadist violence has grown exponentially in Pakistan: Insurgent attacks have increased nearly 800 percent since 2005, and suicide attacks have increased twentyfold. In an emblematic strategic error, on October 10, 2009, the Taliban mounted a 22-hour attack on Pakistan's equivalent of the Pentagon, near the capital of Islamabad, provoking revulsion and fear among citizens and empowering the military to take on the militants. In October, the Pakistani army launched an offensive in South Waziristan—where it had suffered three defeats in the previous five years. This operation was supported by at least half of the Pakistani public, and, unlike pre-

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vious campaigns against the Taliban, it wasn't perceived to be solely for the benefit of the United States. As a result of the offensive, the Taliban can no longer count on South Waziristan as one of their strongholds. The lesson in all of this is to let the Pakistanis continue at their own speed against the Taliban and to desist from publicly scolding them. (It is worth noting that Pakistan has lost many more soldiers to the fight against the Taliban than the United States and other NATO countries combined.)

Still, Pakistani efforts against the Taliban will always run up against the strongly held belief of the Pakistani military and political establishments that Afghanistan would give them "strategic depth" in the event of an Indian attack across their eastern border, and that continuing to support elements of the Taliban is a national security imperative. One fix would be to solve the Kashmir dispute, but this does not seem likely to occur anytime soon.

A more plausible solution in the shorter term is for the international community to recognize Afghanistan as a neutral state, as Switzerland has been since 1815. (Afghanistan itself maintained a traditional policy of neutrality for much of the twentieth century, until the Soviet invasion in 1979.) This idea was proposed earlier this year by Karl F. Inderfurth, an assistant secretary of state for South Asia under President Clinton, who explains that this would involve a "formal Afghan proclamation of neutrality, its endorsement by the [U.N.] Security Council, and the acceptance of reciprocal obligations by the Afghan state and relevant countries." Pakistan would then be reassured that India's large-scale aid program to Afghanistan and its handful of consulates in the country are not part of some wide-ranging Indian scheme to encircle and strangle Pakistan, as many Pakistanis presently believe. To give the proposal teeth, the Security Council could invoke a range of sanctions against any state that interfered with Afghanistan's neutrality.

It has been a staple of Western political theory, ever since Thomas Hobbes published *The Leviathan* in the shadow of the English Civil War, that, if the state does not provide security, life will be "nasty, brutish and short." Almost a decade after the Taliban's fall, we must relearn that elementary lesson—and fulfill the promise we made to Afghan citizens to put their country on the path to a better future. If we do that, Afghanistan could once again attain the measure of stability she enjoyed in the 1970s, when she was at peace with herself and her neighbors. ◆

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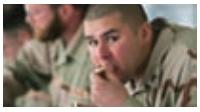
Get Out Yesterday

DAVID RIEFF

From a policy perspective, I am not sure there is much to say about America's war in Afghanistan that goes beyond the blindingly obvious. The invasion in 2001 had an intelligible goal—to destroy a regime that had become a kind of condominium between the Taliban and Al Qaeda, cemented in fine medieval style, according to some reports, by a marriage between one of Osama bin Laden's daughters and one of Mullah Omar's sons. Since the Taliban fell, however, our policy has been incomprehensible—perhaps even to ourselves.



The Navy has warned that the greatest short-term health risk to its personnel in Afghanistan is the ingestion of food or water contaminated by fecal matter.

SOURCE: Navy Environmental and Preventative Medicine Unit 2

During the 2008 presidential campaign, candidate Barack Obama contrasted an unnecessary war in Iraq with a necessary one in Afghanistan. Had he meant by this only that our invasion of Afghanistan had been both legal and necessary, while our invasion of Iraq had been both illegal and immoral, he would have been on solid ground. But he meant far more than that. At the president's June press conference with Russia's head of state, Dmitri Medvedev, President Obama defined the mission as, "first and foremost . . . to dismantle and destroy Al Qaeda and its affiliates so that they can't attack the United States." In order to do this, he said, "we have to make sure that we have a stable Afghan government, and we also have to make sure that we've got a Pakistani government that is working effectively with us to dismantle these networks." All of this, Obama insisted, while hewing to a timetable in which the United States begins to draw down troops toward the end of 2011.

And people accused the Bush administration of millenarianism! The fact is that none of these goals are achievable, not just on Obama's timetable (his Republican critics are absolutely correct on this), but on any timetable at all. The U.S. military has repeatedly confirmed that Al Qaeda is far more active in Pakistan—and, one can reasonably conclude, in the Maghreb, Yemen, Somalia, and Europe, as well—than in Afghanistan. And the Pakistani government is and is always likely to be more concerned with countering Indian adventurism in Afghanistan through a measure of support for the Afghan Taliban and for the mujahedin forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar than collaborating unambiguously with Washington.

The ISI in Islamabad is perfectly capable of helping the CIA out with intelligence while simultaneously maintaining channels to the Taliban's top leaders, the Quetta Shura: Such complexities are what have always put the "great" in the "Great Game." Lord Curzon and Francis Younghusband would have had the lack of sentimentality to understand this, even if Obama does not.

But, if the administration is willing to revoke its commitment to any fixed withdrawal schedule, as it should, and not only for operational reasons but moral ones as well, and so long as the American public continues to support or, at least, does not start seriously pressuring Congress to oppose our continued involvement, despite all the costs in blood and money it entails, there is nothing to stop us from remaining in Afghanistan indefinitely. For, while it may not be possible to defeat the Taliban conclusively, we can certainly hold the cities if we choose to—just as the Russians could have done, had they decided to stay. And, as long as we do this, Hamid Karzai will not end up tortured to death and hanging butchered from a lamppost, like the Russian puppet president, Mohammad Najibullah.

Is any of this worth it? In my view, absolutely not. To make a politically incorrect point, I'd feel far safer if we were doing less fighting in Helmand and unleashing even more drone strikes in Pakistan, and doing more spying on mosques in Brooklyn and Somali community centers in Minneapolis. It is not clear whether the administration truly believes we must persevere in Afghanistan or, whether out of cowardice and cynicism (as Andrew Bacevich has suggested at TNR Online), paralysis, or fear, it doesn't know how to extricate us from

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that country. That is bad enough. But do Obama and his advisers understand how unrealizable their goals are?

I would like to believe that they do. Whatever else can be said about him, Obama has an excellent analytic mind. It is not as if "we" know something he does not, and, unlike the Bush administration in 2003, which also had many intelligent people working for it, this administration is neither stoned on victory nor drawn to geostrategic master plans. But, while "when you're in a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging" may be the oldest political cliché in the book, policymakers almost never seem to take its lesson to heart.

So, in all likelihood, God help us, we will be staying in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future. That much seems obvious, and, while I am all for opposing the mission as a matter of conscience, I have no hope at all that this opposition will have any effect. That's OK. Historically, being on the losing side in such battles has rarely been a dishonorable place to be. I am somewhat more hopeful—comparatively, anyway—that the fact that almost everyone knows the Obama administration's stated goals in continuing to prosecute this senseless war are unachievable will further the American people's growing disenchantment with expeditionary wars and humanitarian and human-rights-based military interventions. There may be nothing that can be done about Afghanistan, but perhaps its pointlessness will at least serve as a caution when, as will certainly happen, a future administration proposes yet another adventure in imperial idealism somewhere down the road.

David Rieff is the author of At the Point of a Gun: Democratic Dreams and Armed Intervention.

Stay Forever

JOSEF JOFFE

No soldier wants to be the last one to die in a war, goes the old saw. In Afghanistan, make that: No coalition member wants to be the last one to quit. And so, competitive withdrawal has practically begun. According to President Obama, the United States will start drawing down next year. Canada is preparing to exit in 2011. Poland is talking complete withdrawal by 2012. Britain wants to end it all by 2015.

This is no way to win. It's like a trainer announcing in round three that he will throw in the towel in round six. His man will take no more risks, while the other boxer will wait it out or go for the knockout punch.

Already, President Karzai seems to be preparing for our departure by catering to the Taliban. And, with every platoon that heads home, our wards will increase their bets on whoever they think will step into the vacuum—the Taliban, the warlords, the Iranians, the Pakistani ISI (the intelligence service that practically invented the Taliban in the days of Charlie Wilson and the Soviets).

This problem is built into any counterinsurgency strategy. Whose commitment is more sustainable, hence more credible: the insurgents' or the intruders'? The "bad guys" fight where they live, and so, they have nowhere else to go. But we, who fight for abstract reasons only remotely related to our core security, can always ship out. The locals—be they wards or warriors of God—know it.

They know that democracies fight wars of choice only if victory is swift, bloodless, and reasonably priced. They don't like operations that are indecisive, and this one has lasted even longer than the war in Vietnam. The asymmetry has become crueler over time. Thirty-five years after the fall of Saigon, postmodern Western society is horrified even by blood we shed on the other side. This our enemies have learned as well, hence the tactics of Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Taliban, which lure our forces into killing (either real or make-believe) civilians. Nothing has soured Germans more on the war in Afghanistan than the scores of Afghans killed near Kunduz in a German-ordered bombing run by U.S. aircraft late last year. How many were civilians? We'll never know.

Afghanistan's 2009 GDP: **$13.47 billion**

Amount Afghans paid out in bribes that year: **$2.5 billion**

Average bribe: **$160**

GDP per capita: **$426**

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Democracies will fight as fiercely as totalitarians when their own lands are at stake. But they won't fight to the end in a difficult war of choice, as Afghanistan surely is. Yet the willingness to stay as long as it takes is the alpha and omega of any counterinsurgency strategy. If we go in, we have to be willing to stay *sine die*. We must not think like a traditional army that knocks out the enemy and then goes home. We have to think like a police force. The police stay on the beat forever. Only then can they tell the good guys from the bad guys. Only then can they gain vital intelligence from the locals. Only because they reliably serve and protect can they conquer "hearts and minds."

But why would we stay where interests (remote) and costs (high) are so unbalanced? There are lots of good reasons. Our interests may be abstract, but they are not unreal. The greater Middle East, from the Levant to Kashmir, will be in the twenty-first century what Europe was in the twentieth: the arena where endless vicious conflict—strategic as well as ideological, within as well as between states—will come home to haunt us if it remains unchecked. Indeed, the Taliban pale against a failing, deeply anti-Western nuclear state like Pakistan or a revolutionary regime like Iran's that believes it is on a mission from God.

Here, then, is our conundrum: We must never set an exit date, as we did not in Kosovo. But, for the last decade, Western forces have stayed in Kosovo only because nobody dies, neither "them" nor us. American troops are still in Germany because there are no IEDs on the autobahns. The only way, therefore, for us to stay in Afghanistan is to go with our advantages and dodge our weaknesses as democracies, which recoil sooner or later from the sight of blood—theirs and ours.

Our advantages are technology and training: skilled soldiers, "eyes in the sky," information processing, and standoff weapons ranging from drones to aircraft carriers and long-range bombers. Civil War General Nathan Bedford Forrest is

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(erroneously) credited with the counsel to "git thar fustest with the mostest" as a guarantee of military success. Today, the key is to "git thar fustest with the bestest"—be swift and precise. Keep enemies off balance, exploit surprise, rely on air- and space-borne intelligence, disrupt their command and logistics networks (yes, even irregulars have supply lines), immobilize them, keep them from massing, avoid "collateral damage." Deny them sanctuaries and stay away from the population, which also means: Forget nation-building. There is no nation in Afghanistan.

No, you can't "win" that way—in the sense of enshrining a preferred political order or routing the enemy for good. But you can constrain and deter your foes by maximizing their costs and minimizing yours. Best of all, a combination of watchful presence and nimble offensive can be sustained indefinitely. And indefinite the twenty-first century's "Great Game" will be. The tactical payoff is the enemy's growing conviction that we won't go home. The strategic benefit is that he might eventually reconsider and start talking in earnest. That's the best we can do, and it is better than throwing in the towel in round six.

Josef Joffe is editor of Die Zeit, a senior fellow at the Institute for International Studies, and an Abramowitz Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Unshackle the Troops

AMITAI ETZIONI

Many good people who have never fought in a war find something appealing in America's willingness to take more casualties in order to spare innocent civilian lives. For those, like me, who have been in combat, the choices at hand look somewhat different. Consider the following likely scenario.

A platoon of Marines is patrolling an area in Afghanistan. To avoid IEDs, the Marines stay off the roads and advance through a field. At the edge of the field is a row of huts. Suddenly, two Marines are hit. The Marines take cover, although there is little to protect them in the open field. Another one is hit. The snipers' fire is clearly coming from the huts. The Marines are fully prepared for such a situation, having positioned artillery and tanks nearby before they took to the field. Their platoon leader calls for the huts to be shelled. But a higher ranking commander disagrees; he fears, with good reason, that there are civilians in the huts. The platoon leader is bitterly disappointed, but orders are orders—and, hence, he instructs the Marines to get up and storm the huts. On the way, the Marines take more casualties. When they finally reach the huts, the platoon leader reminds them that, under the rules of engagement, they must first call on the residents to leave before they can attack. These warnings give some snipers ample time to move on, while others fire a few more rounds.

For the past year, U.S. troops in Afghanistan have been operating with such constricting rules of engagement. The idea, put forward by former American commander Stanley McChrystal, was that we could not wage a campaign for hearts and minds if we were killing many innocent Afghans. Under these rules, American soldiers have sometimes been ordered not to fire until they are fired upon, and it is harder for them to get permission for an airstrike. An officer of the Fifth Stryker Brigade explained to me that all the rules can be set aside if soldiers claim that they had to do so in self-defense. However, few are willing to risk being reprimanded, let alone court martialed, and all pay mind to the "climate" that the rules of engagement foster.

At some level, these measures have worked: Afghan civilian fatalities are down sharply, from 332 in the year before the rules were introduced to 197 in the year that followed. But American casualties have increased significantly over the same period. It is not known how many of these are due to the increased number of troops and intensified engagements, and how many are due to the new rules. But the troops themselves are troubled. "We can't engage until fired upon," Specialist Jeffrey Cole recently told NPR, "and it's not really giving us a fair chance."

Now, America's new commander in Afghanistan, David Petraeus, is considering revising these rules. It's a wise idea. Restrictive rules of engagement do little to win hearts and minds. And the key to minimizing casualties, Afghan as well as American, lies elsewhere: in finding a way to stop fighting this war.

The source of our dilemma surrounding the rules of engagement is not the way we fight but the way our opponents fight: Insurgents are violating the rules of war, while demanding to be protected by them. The rules and traditions of war directly address the issue at hand—by requiring those who engage in warfare to separate themselves from the civilian population. Fighters are to wear uniforms or some other insignia that clearly mark them (and, by the way, the authority, typically a national government, that is accountable for their acts). Their vehicles and bivouacs are also to be clearly separated from those of civilians. What is at issue here is not a small matter of a logo on one's hat or sleeves. It is a matter of enabling adversaries to separate the fighters from the civilians and to spare the latter.

Insurgents and terrorists in many parts of the world have discovered that, by violating these rules of war, they gain major advantages. They fire on soldiers from residential areas, store ammunition in mosques, and employ ambulances to transport bombs and fighters—in all these instances, using civilians as human shields. Hamas, Hezbollah, and the insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan are among the many who practice this form of warfare. Indeed, a recent report reveals that, as the Taliban learned about the new rules of engagement, they increased their use of civilian homes as posts from which to fire at our troops.

The main responsibility for causing civilian casualties, in short, is on the Taliban. Yet, for reasons I cannot fathom, instead of making this case whenever civilian casualties take place, American generals apologize time and again. I am not against expressing regret about the loss of life, any life, including those of the Taliban. However, in this context, the generals who speak for America, nay, for the free world, reinforce the precept that the casualties are our fault, period. We ought to be clearer in our own minds, and more articulate in addressing others, about why innocent civilians are killed and how such deaths can be minimized.

Moreover, even setting aside the use of human shields, the Taliban cause many more civilian casualties than the Americans because they often set out to deliberately kill innocent Afghans,

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attacking mosques, weddings, and funerals. If counterinsurgency theory were correct, and body counts made a significant difference in the competition for hearts and minds, then the Taliban would have no supporters left. The notion that what is at issue are statistics ignores other realities—especially the ethnic loyalties of the Pashtun, who are the Taliban's kin and who live in Afghanistan's most contested area. It also ignores, or at least underestimates, the role of communication. The Taliban have been astonishingly successful at escaping blame for the civilian deaths they cause. Like our generals' repeated failure to forcefully point out that terrorists use human shields—and that accidental civilian deaths are, therefore, usually their responsibility—this problem can be countered not by changing the statistics, but by changing those in the Pentagon who are in charge of communication aimed at Afghans.

None of this is to suggest that we should take civilian casualties lightly. Even if killing innocent civilians is not the prime problem with our strategy, it is still—for moral reasons—deeply regrettable. We can and should seek to minimize such fatalities by improving our intelligence and learning more about the local culture. However, we should not ignore that the main moral turning point is *before* we commit to fighting. We should heed one of the central principles of just war theory: Never wage war unless all other means have been exhausted. This principle suggests that we should also discontinue fighting when other options are available. Thus, instead of asking our troops to fight this war under rules that increase our losses in the vain hope of gaining popularity, we should offer to withdraw our forces as long as the Taliban agree not to harbor terrorists who threaten us or our allies. And we should make clear that our bombers, drones, and Special Forces will stand by to punish those who violate this understanding. (A similar position has been advocated by Vice President Biden.) If the Taliban honor this agreement, it will mean an end to the war and, of course, to civilian casualties. If not, then we will have to fight. However, in that case, even as we do our best to limit collateral damage, let us also ensure that our troops are not constrained by excessively strict rules.

Amitai Etzioni is a professor of international relations at George Washington University and author of Security First.

Rescue the North

ANNA BADKHEN

Naubad, Afghanistan

In a wheat field in northern Afghanistan this spring, beneath the Cretaceous convulsions of the Hindu Kush mountains, a village elder named Ajab Khan shared with me the unsentimental math of his region's farmers. An acre of wheat, Khan said, yields $400. An acre of opium poppies yields $20,000. The people of his village, Naubad, had grown exclusively poppies until 2004, when the government of Hamid Karzai asked them to stop. In return, the government promised to hook up the village's 200 or so homes to an electric grid; build a clinic, a school, and a communal well; and, in order to help the farmers take their crop to market, pave over the tentative parallel ruts that connected Naubad to the rest of the world.

That winter, and the winters that followed, the farmers of Naubad sowed

Chad Hunt

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wheat in the clay soil they still furrow by hand with primitive wooden tools. But the infrastructure the villagers had been promised as a reward never materialized. They are still waiting for the electricity, the clinic, the school, the access to clean water, and the paved roads. Their patience is running thin. "We have no help from anyone," said Khan. "It was much better under the Taliban."

This was a perspective I encountered frequently during my month-long journey this spring across northern Afghanistan. For years, the international focus has been on the southern part of the country—the Pashtun belt that constitutes the Taliban's stronghold. The north was assumed to be reliably anti-Taliban, and so received neither the attention nor the resources granted to the south. The United States, which, until this summer, had few troops on the ground in the north, spends approximately six times more per capita in southern Helmand Province than in northern Takhar Province.

As a result, the people of northern Afghanistan—who, in 2001, abhorred the Taliban and embraced the U.S.-led war, expecting a new era of prosperity and peace—have seen little improvement in their lives. Now, they are welcoming the Taliban back to the region—if not with enthusiasm, then with resignation that their puritanical and cruel governance may be better than the kleptocracy and abandonment that followed their ouster. The Taliban control virtually all of Kunduz and Baghlan Provinces (combined population: as high as two million-plus—which would make the area more than twice as populous as Kandahar Province). They run several districts in Takhar Province—including one where, in 2001, I interviewed refugees who had found safety after fleeing Taliban-controlled territories. The Taliban are also present in Badakhshan, the remote redoubt of legendary Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud. Taliban fighters flag down traffic at impromptu checkpoints on the roads of Balkh Province. They terrorize travelers on the main route that connects Kabul and Shir Khan Bandar, a major port on the border with Tajikistan that NATO uses to bring in supplies. In all these areas, the Taliban are virtually unchallenged.

The U.S. counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan, which was laid out last December, calls for an expanded NATO presence in the country. As part of this surge, some 3,000 American troops will be deployed to northern Afghanistan this summer, joining the approximately 4,400 German troops already on the ground. But the opinion I kept hearing over and over this spring—from villagers, local and government officials, and international relief workers—was that bringing in more security forces will not help defeat the resurgent Taliban in the north. Aid will.

"Instead of spending money on the military, they should spend money on aid—for civilians, for jobs," Ustad Atta Mohammad Noor, the influential governor of Balkh, told me. More than one

70 percent of Afghans think the country is going in the right direction, according to a poll conducted for ABC News and the BBC.

SOURCE: *The Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research*

More than one-third of Afghans regularly watch "Afghan Star," an "American Idol"–style talent show in which contestants compete for a recording contract and a $5,000 prize. Last year, 2,700 people auditioned for the fourth season.

SOURCE: *Time, CNN*

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million people live in Balkh; 90 percent are completely impoverished farmers, with no access to clean water, health care, or education. Jobs and infrastructure, the governor said, would translate into popular support for the counterinsurgency effort and for the Karzai government, which most Afghans I met in the north deride. "It's not only the job of the Afghan government," he argued. "It is also the job of the international community, especially of the United States."

A clear connection exists in northern Afghanistan between the lack of aid and the rise of the insurgency. In Kunduz, the Taliban are strongest in two districts: Chardara and Gor Tepa. In Chardara, the Taliban infamously hijacked two NATO fuel tankers last September, provoking a U.S. airstrike that killed up to 142 people, mostly civilians. In Gor Tepa, according to the provincial police chief, about two dozen "foreign fighters from Al Qaeda" have found refuge. Both districts also are home to thousands of former refugees who have returned from Pakistan after years of exile, only to find themselves without jobs, food, clean water, health care, or adequate shelter. The Taliban harvest the desperation of the poor, the governor of Kunduz told me. They provide the neediest with basic commodities, such as food, and then recruit from their ranks. Some foot soldiers are paid as much as $500 a month—twice the paycheck of an Afghan police officer.

The provincial head of the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation said his office has received no budget at all this year to help the returning refugees. The refugees "call us liars," he said. "They say, 'You have betrayed us.' … For all we know, they have joined the Taliban."

Of course, delivering aid to northern Afghanistan is difficult and dangerous. Already, sections of the north are so firmly under Taliban control, and kidnappings are so frequent, that relief agencies—Afghan and Western alike—do not venture there. When I asked a security adviser for a Western relief agency about the highway from Kunduz to Mazar-e-Sharif, the capital of Balkh, he replied, "Don't even dare travel on that road."

I took the road. And, on it, just north of Pul-e-Khumri—the capital of Baghlan, where a group of U.N. workers had been kidnapped the previous week—I saw a sign that it was possible to deliver assistance even to the most perilous areas of the north. Ankle-deep in muck churned up by recent rain, two dozen or so road crew workers in orange vests stabbed at the mud with shovels. About as many Afghan soldiers stood guard. This did not look like much—a bunch of men cleaning a road—but it was an act of defiance: The Taliban have threatened to kill anyone who works for the government, and these men were risking their lives. They were determined to make this tiny, blighted slice of Afghanistan marginally better.

The United States might do well to follow their example. It seems like a better deal than just handing over half the country to the Taliban.

Anna Badkhen's book about war and food, PEACE MEALS, will be published in October. Her recent reporting trip to Afghanistan was made possible by a grant from the Center for Investigative Reporting.

BRUCE PETERSON

Awaken the Pashtuns

FOUAD AJAMI

THE WAR IN Afghanistan is the revenge of the Iraq war. It was amid the great debate about Iraq that there was born the myth of Afghanistan as the good war of "necessity"—the September 11 war. We had erred, American liberals insisted; we had opted for the wrong war in Mesopotamia when we should have stayed the course in Afghanistan. An operative of the Democratic Party, the "strategist" of its defeats in the presidential elections of 2000 and 2004, Robert Shrum, once gave a straightforward account of the genesis of this mindset: "I was part of the 2004 Kerry campaign which elevated the idea of Afghanistan as the 'right war' to conventional Democratic wisdom. This was accurate as criticism of the Bush administration, but it was also reflexive and perhaps by now even misleading as policy."

Amount of international aid pledged to Afghanistan since 2001: **$62 billion**

Amount of international aid spent in Afghanistan since 2001: **$36 billion**

Proportion of aid money that has left Afghanistan: **40 percent**

SOURCE: *Afghanistan Ministry of Finance, Oxfam*

In his campaign in 2008, Barack Obama was keen to make it known that he was no pacifist who opposed all wars; he only opposed "stupid wars," he said, and Iraq was his prime exhibit of stupid wars. Thus, a man who was devastating in his assessment of the war in Mesopotamia was ready to do war in the Hindu Kush. Some months into his presidency, in August 2009, Obama was to take up the matter of Afghanistan before the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He wasn't exactly their idea of a commander-in-chief, and they were not exactly his base, but the president would now claim a military campaign of his own: "The insurgency in Afghanistan didn't just happen overnight, and we won't defeat it overnight. This will not be quick, nor easy. But we must never forget: This is not a war of choice. This is a war of necessity. Those who attacked America on September 11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which Al Qaeda could plot to kill more Americans."

There was a contradiction at the heart of this summons to war: Obama fell back on September 11 as a *casus belli* in Afghanistan, even as he underplayed the menace of radical Islamism. We were not to speak of the "war on terror," Obama's administration had it. His heart and his priorities lay elsewhere—health care, financial reform, climate change, the redrawing of the balance between the state and the private sector, the state of our public schools. No wonder he took his time finalizing an Afghan war policy of his own. He did so on December 1, at West Point, practically a full year into his presidency. There was something dutiful and reluctant about the speech, which seemed to treat the war as a campaign promise to be fulfilled, a damnable, thankless fight that could neither be won nor abandoned—something of Lyndon Johnson's attitude toward the war that wrecked his presidency. On different occasions, LBJ called Vietnam a "bitch of a war"; said, "I just don't think it is worth fighting for, and I don't think we can get out—it's just the biggest damn mess"; and declared, "I don't think the people of the country know much about Vietnam, and I think they care a hell of a lot less."

That knowledge, and the laments, didn't rescue LBJ. Perhaps we are a less ideological nation now; perhaps we can relegate Afghanistan to the obscurity it so richly deserves with greater ease than LBJ and his contem-

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poraries could do with Vietnam. The jihadist menace is portable nowadays. Al Qaeda has homes aplenty beyond Afghanistan—Yemen and Somalia are new bases from which terror could be waged. Besides, the United States didn't know—and still doesn't—the Afghan cultural and political landscape. We have no worthy strategic partner in place; there are only warlords and bandit chieftains thrilled that the chaos and breakdown of their country has pulled a great, wealthy power into their midst. A culture of dependency on foreign handouts has taken root among the Afghans. We say we are there to rebuild the Afghan state. But, in truth, the place has never had central authority worth its name.

Since Obama has not conveyed much enthusiasm for the war, it is little surprise that he has been unable to sell the war to his allies at home. Three-fifths of the Democratic caucus in the House of Representatives recently voted for an amendment that would have required the president to present a plan by next April for the "safe, orderly and expeditious redeployment" of U.S. troops from Afghanistan.

Yet, despite all of this, Obama has chosen to stay in the country and pursue a counterinsurgency strategy. In its barest outline, counterinsurgency is a war for the loyalty of the native population. There are determined insurgents, and those you destroy; there are "accidental guerrillas" who drifted into the fight, and those you rehabilitate and buy off; there is the great mass on the fence who wait to see if the foreign power, and the dependent native regime, have the means and the will to prevail. The American military planners prosecuting this Afghan campaign are shrewd enough to recognize the differences between Afghanistan and Iraq, but the template of the Iraq war hovers over the Afghan battle. The "Anbar Awakening" broke the alliance between the Sunnis of Iraq and the jihadists who had converged on that country from Jordan and Egypt and Saudi Arabia and Libya; now, the Americans need a "Pashtun Awakening" that would break with the Taliban. In Iraq, a vast militia of some 100,000 recruits, the Sons of Iraq, were peeled off from the insurgency. A defection of a similar magnitude is the goal of the American command.

Will it work? I bring to this American venture in Afghanistan an ambivalence I didn't toward Iraq. But we can't quit this endeavor as of yet. In a perfect world, my own preference would have been to avoid deep entanglement in Afghanistan, but we are beyond that point. We ought to at least give the brilliant David Petraeus a chance to find out whether our strategy can succeed, even as we recognize that—thanks to the steep obstacles posed by Afghanistan, the evident lack of enthusiasm for this war from Obama, and the outright hostility to the entire enterprise from Washington's governing party—we may be asking more of the general than he or any military commander can deliver. Petraeus surely understands the difficult situation in which he finds himself. Nearly a quarter-century ago, in his Ph.D. dissertation, "The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam," he wrote that, when it comes to military interventions, "time and patience are not American virtues in abundant supply." He quotes, poignantly, the verse of a "disgruntled general" who bristled at the burdens civilians throw at military commanders:

> I am not allowed to run the train
> The whistle I can't blow.
> I am not allowed to say how fast
> The railroad trains can go.
> I am not allowed to shoot off steam
> Nor even clang the bell.
> But let it jump the goddam tracks
> And see who catches hell!

Fouad Ajami teaches at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He is also a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Save Whatever We Can

AHMED RASHID

It is undeniable that U.S. prospects in Afghanistan look bleak. Over 100 NATO soldiers were killed in June—more than during any month of the war to date. No European government and increasingly no American one can sustain such losses for long. At the same time, senior U.S. officials who handle Afghanistan and Pakistan policy have been clashing with one another, both in Washington and Kabul. Nor is there a reliable partner on the ground. President Hamid Karzai has presided over corruption and a striking lack of progress in development. All the while, the Taliban have been spreading throughout the country. No matter what advances NATO forces make during the next six months in Helmand and Kandahar provinces—Taliban strongholds, which are located in the south—it seems fair to wonder whether these achievements will prove remotely sustainable over the long term.

Afghanistan: What's changed?

	UNDER THE TALIBAN	TODAY
Children enrolled in school	900,000, none of them girls	More than 6 million, one-third of which are girls
Afghans with access to some form of health care	9 percent	85 percent
Access to information	Taliban-run radio stations	60 radio channels, 8 TV stations, 500,000 Internet users
Phone ownership	40,000 landlines	10 million cellphone users, around 500,000 landlines
Proportion of the world's illicit opium supply produced by Afghanistan	70 percent	89 percent
Under-five mortality rate	257 deaths/1,000 children	257 deaths/1,000 children
Life expectancy	47 years	44 years—the fourth-worst in the world

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This grim situation suggests that President Obama needs a change in strategy—one that takes into account the fact that NATO troops probably will not be able to stay in Afghanistan much longer. On the diplomatic front, the United States must begin talking to its enemy. Pakistan has said it could mediate negotiations that would bring the Taliban face-to-face with Americans. And, with Karzai determined to talk to the Taliban, it would be to average Afghans' benefit for the United States not to remain on the sidelines—since, without U.S. participation, Pakistan and Iran could exercise excessive influence over the negotiations or Karzai could give away too much.

But it is not just the diplomatic strategy that must change; it is also the military strategy. And here, there is one deceptively simple idea that could make a substantial difference: Concentrate on comparatively easy objectives. Providing security to large numbers of Afghans, strengthening the Karzai government, and encouraging economic growth are all within the grasp of Western forces—if they are willing to stop battling for control of the pro-Taliban south and redirect their efforts to more modest projects.

The most obvious need is to clear and secure the ring road that links Afghanistan's major cities and that has been mostly rebuilt, at considerable cost, by the international community. Today, huge swaths of the road are controlled by the Taliban, and ordinary Afghans cannot even drive safely from Kabul to Kandahar, thanks to checkpoints run by corrupt police, criminal gangs, warlords, trucking contractors, and various Taliban groups. The millions of Afghans whom the ring road reaches would certainly benefit from an effort by the United States and NATO to secure the highway; and the country as a whole could see economic benefits in the form of increased trade. Plus, it would give NATO a way to reduce the massive corruption that currently permeates the trucking of supplies to various bases.

A private security contractor working for the Defense Department is 4.5 times more likely to be killed than a member of the military.

SOURCE: Congressional Research Service

Second, NATO should focus on securing the provinces around Kabul, areas where the Taliban are relatively weak—albeit still capable of tormenting the local population—and pro-government sentiment is fairly strong. Routing the Taliban conclusively in these provinces would give the United States an opening to invest heavily in economic development, perhaps turning the area into a model for what could be accomplished elsewhere in the country.

Another step would be clearing the eastern and northern provinces, which are, like the area around Kabul, more pro-government than the Taliban-dominated south. As for the south: U.S. forces should settle for less ambitious aims, such as preventing Taliban expansion and seeking to turn local residents against the militia. But there would be a tacit acceptance that the south would be the Taliban's main bargaining chip in any negotiations.

Emphasizing political dialogue while taking on easier goals seems likely to be a more popular strategy with Afghans than waging a possibly futile battle for Helmand and Kandahar. It should also prove more popular in the West and could decrease the pressure on NATO governments to withdraw their troops. The strategy might not lead to ideal outcomes; but it may, at this point, be the West's most realistic option for helping Afghanistan.

Ahmed Rashid, a Pakistani journalist, is most recently the author of DESCENT INTO CHAOS: THE U.S. AND THE DISASTER IN PAKISTAN, AFGHANISTAN, AND CENTRAL ASIA. *His best-selling book* TALIBAN *has just been updated and reissued on the tenth anniversary of its publication.*

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Stop Blaming the Afghans

STEVE COLL

In September 1991, the president of Afghanistan, Muhammad Najibullah, a former communist secret police chief turned Islamic nationalist, delivered an emotional speech to the Afghan parliament. Najibullah knew the era of foreign intervention in Afghanistan over which he had presided was ending. The Soviet Union had pulled back from direct combat. Radical Islamist rebels covertly backed by Pakistan controlled much of the countryside. Before parliament, Najibullah begged for national unity. His countrymen faced a stark choice, he believed: They could unite to protect Afghanistan's political, religious, and cultural diversity—including millions of girls in schools and women in jobs—or they could succumb to an obscurantist revolution carried out by religious fanatics aligned with a hostile neighbor.

"No one can carry along all his properties with him to the grave," Najibullah said, as he pleaded for an end to selfish ambition among the country's factional leaders. "From king to beggar, all are going to the grave only with two meters of shroud. … Then what is ambition for?"

If President Hamid Karzai reflected occasionally on his predecessor's homily, it might brighten the prospects for American policy in Afghanistan. The Afghan president might be advised to reflect as well on Najibullah's fate, after his exhausted international partners abandoned him: The Taliban beat him to death and displayed his corpse in a Kabul traffic circle.

Najibullah failed, but, toward the end of his presidency, he had many of the big ideas right, as General David Petraeus might say. Under pressure, Najibullah developed a credible political and regional diplomatic strategy to reinforce Afghan national unity in the face of an intensifying Islamist insurgency. At home, he exploited conflicts within the armed opposition and negotiated power-sharing truces with regional, tribal, religious, and militia leaders. Abroad, he appealed to Moscow, Washington, New Delhi, Ankara, European capitals, and the United Nations to support a political process designed to isolate extremists. In speeches, he continually appealed to Afghan nationalism. To foreigners, he pleaded for cooperation on the basis of common interests—mainly, the prevention of a radical revolution that would destabilize South and Central Asia. But for American indifference and the final collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991, he might have made it through.

Since taking command of the Afghan war effort, Petraeus has stressed the importance of "unity of effort" within the Obama administration. By pointedly repeating that phrase, he has sought to repair the fissures exposed by General Stanley McChrystal and his aides in their undisciplined comments to *Rolling Stone*. Petraeus is right to demand better of his colleagues, of course, but American unity of effort will be insufficient even if it can be forged; Afghan political cohesion matters much more.

To date in Afghanistan, American political strategy, if it can be called that, has mostly exacerbated the country's fragmentation. If the Obama administration is to succeed, or at least avoid catastrophic failure, it will have to nurture a very different political climate. Among other things, Afghan unity will be necessary to hold the improving but ethnically unbalanced Afghan National Army together during the next several years, as NATO troops gradually pull back from combat; to forestall coups or assassinations in Kabul; and to broaden the political base in Kabul from which reconciliation talks with elements of the Pakistan-backed Taliban leadership can be tentatively explored. In the absence of such unity, no military campaign to contain or marginalize the Taliban is likely to prevail.

Armed Defense Department security contractors by nationality

Americans: **137**

Third-country nationals: **960**

Afghans: **15,301**

SOURCE: Congressional Research Service

Unfortunately, the Afghan body politic is in increasing danger of fissuring. Afghan faction leaders and the Pakistan Army can easily see that the days of extensive direct ground combat by NATO forces are numbered. All the regional and internal parties to the conflict are therefore maneuvering—unstably—to shape the aftermath of a NATO-dominated ground war. Pakistan is pushing its most noxious proxy militias, such as the Haqqani network, toward the bargaining table, in search of influence, and Iran is priming its networks in western and central regions of the country. American military commanders and policymakers must now either control this hedging process or be defeated by it.

President Obama's decision to announce a transition date for U.S. combat troops in July 2011 created intense confusion in the region. Lately, Obama has attempted to clarify that his policy would not amount to "switching off the lights" in Afghanistan irresponsibly. His appointment of Petraeus is as stalwart a signal as he could possibly send. Yet Canada has named a withdrawal date, the Dutch are going, and even Britain's new prime minister mentioned 2015 as a lights-out date. Afghans know that neither Obama nor Petraeus can deliver Europe or control American public opinion about a deteriorating war.

Northern Afghan ethnic groups such as the Hazaras, Uzbeks, and Tajiks (who heavily influence the Afghan National Army) today must prepare for the possibility of renewed, post-NATO civil war against Taliban militias supported by Pakistan. This prospect—a repetition of the death and misery of the 1990s—hangs heavily over the country. In some respects, the memory of that war is a source of enduring restraint; no sane Afghan wants to return to those dark days.

The United States has exacerbated Afghanistan's centrifugal forces in several ways. In addition to signaling an exit strategy without actually possessing one, it has lashed itself, since the Bush administration, to a single, self-isolating politician—Hamid Karzai—whose temperament increasingly suggests King Lear. Karzai has lately confused and worried his countrymen by negotiating in secret with Pakistan and the Taliban about the country's future; by firing his spy chief and interior minis-

LANDOV

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Most recent Al Qaeda census

Afghanistan: **50 to 100**

Somalia: **20 to 300**

Pakistan: **More than 300**

Yemen: **50 to 200**

North Africa and associated European cells: **600 to 800**

SOURCES: *New York Times, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, BBC*

ter for opaque reasons; and by engaging in other dangerous bluffs.

To have any hope of achieving their goals in the country, the United States and NATO will require—with as much of Karzai's leadership as they can obtain—the largest possible anti-Taliban coalition, encompassing not only the presidential palace and its self-protecting networks, but also Karzai's political opposition, the parliament, women's groups, and civil society, as well as military, tribal, religious, and regional leaders. To date, coalition-building efforts of this character, such as the Kabul peace jirga staged in June, have been instrumental and controlled by the presidential palace; they have not been seen as credible by many important groups fearful of the Taliban.

When the leader of the Afghan opposition, Abdullah Abdullah, visited Washington this spring, hardly anyone in the Obama administration would see him, for fear that such a meeting might unleash paranoia in the presidential palace. But the appeasement of Karzai's insecurity cannot make for durable politics. There are multiple strategies or institutions that could be employed to build a broader coalition, using international leverage and support: an emergency national unity cabinet; a parliament-led or otherwise broadly based national commission to explore talks with the Taliban; a series of national jirgas that were truly independent and representative; or a "Bonn II" process of constitutional reform supported by international diplomacy, to incorporate corrigible Taliban and broaden political participation at the provincial, district, and town levels. The mechanisms of such a strategy matter less than its purpose: the visible, credible, sustainable reinforcement of a national consensus to prevent the Taliban or any other armed faction from seizing power as international troops gradually pull back from direct combat, and as international policy in Afghanistan increasingly emphasizes politics, economics, and regional stability.

The rhetoric and negotiated pursuit of national unity lay at the heart of Najibullah's political strategy during the Soviet exit. Karzai lacks Najibullah's toughness and savvy, but the money, arms, internal political networks, and international coalitions potentially at the Afghan president's command are far more powerful than any Najibullah could muster. For the United States to deliver Afghanistan to its next presidential election in passable condition, Karzai does not need to become Nelson Mandela. However, his flawed but constitutionally legitimate leadership does need to be located in a much broader political and regional diplomatic setting, one that can help Afghans to pull together in the face of what the great majority of them still view as the unifying threat of the Taliban's violent coercion.

As the war has grown more difficult, American and European commentators who advocate for troop withdrawal often seem to find it necessary to dehumanize Afghans to justify their own loss of will, or to blame Afghans for the international community's own policy failures—i.e., saying the country is hopelessly corrupt, drug-addled, primitive, perpetually at war. Among its other flaws, this line of thinking misjudges Afghanistan, a pluralistic and very poor country that has repeatedly rejected Taliban-style ideology and retains a strong sense of national identity, one that produced a unified and mainly peaceful nation for much of the twentieth century, until a succession of outside invaders shattered its cohesion and independence.

The goal of American policy in Afghanistan is not the construction of Switzerland, as the war's facetious and worn-down opponents often put it, but an effort to finish what was started in the autumn of 2001—the reconstruction of a country that has a chance, after so much sacrifice, to look somewhat more like Colombia, the Philippines, or Bangladesh than Somalia. Otherwise, as the former European Union envoy to Afghanistan, Francesc Vendrell, said recently, "Having failed dismally to make the Afghan people our allies, we will inevitably abandon them to a combination of Taliban in the south and the warlords in the north and—having somehow redefined success—we will go home convinced that it is the Afghan people who have failed us."

Steve Coll is the president of the New America Foundation and author of GHOST WARS: THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE CIA, AFGHANISTAN, AND BIN LADEN, FROM THE SOVIET INVASION TO SEPTEMBER 10, 2001.

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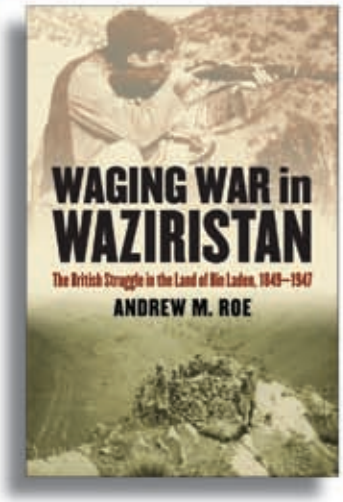

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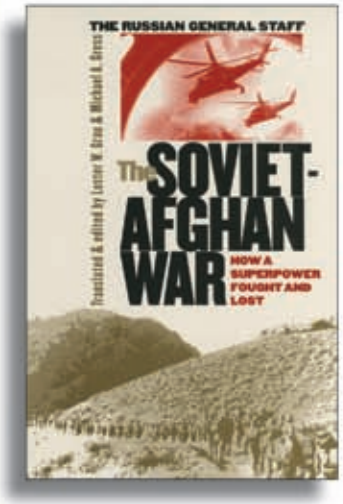

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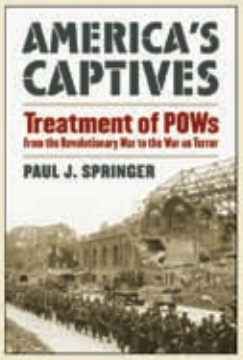

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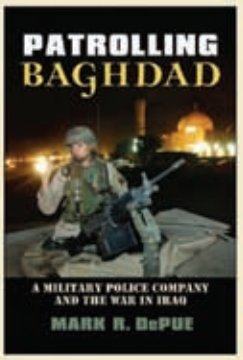

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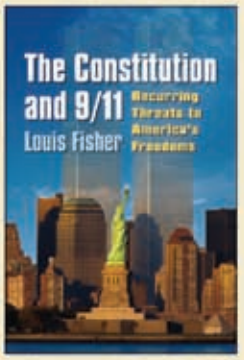

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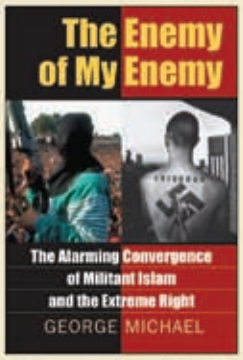

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

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It took Samuel Maoz more than twenty years, he says, to write *Lebanon*. In June 1982 he was a tank commander in the division of the Israel Defense Forces that invaded Lebanon. In 1987 he went to film school in Israel and became a writer-director. In 2007 he decided to write about his war experiences. In a press comment he notes: "My memory of the events themselves had become dim and blurred. . . . What remained fresh and bleeding was the emotional memory." That memory pervades the film, but one can hardly call the events themselves dim.

LEBANON
Sony Pictures Classics

AROUND A SMALL MOUNTAIN
Cinema Guild

Lebanon takes place almost entirely within an Israeli tank. We see outside when the soldiers do, but we almost never leave the tank. Four men in their twenties are the crew, one of them the commander. It begins with the start of the invasion, but the picture has no political content. We know who is doing what, but the center of the film is the trials of the tank crew, not politics.

It is almost always a bit dark. Faces are oily and smudged. From the start the atmosphere is not exactly gung-ho: the four men are obeying orders, not frightened but not much more than obedient. They are visited occasionally by a snippy superior who checks on them and gives them directions, but most of their orders come via radiophone. (A simple code is used: a soldier is called a "flower," a dead soldier an "angel.") During their drive forward, they are given charge of a Syrian prisoner, who is fiercely resistant. That prisoner is visited by a Christian Phalangist who is the one vicious person we meet. Otherwise, the tank simply makes its way to a rendezvous, firing as necessary or as ordered, often delayed and hampered. That traversal is the film.

Naturally—not plot formula, just naturally—quarrels break out among the crew, sometimes wildly. But we know from very near the beginning that essentially what we are about to enter is much less a story than an embedding. We are in that tank, a universe of its own, for almost all the picture's ninety-four minutes.

I thought, strangely enough, of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. When I was a schoolboy, my class was taken several times to the museum. The paintings were all right, the nude statues better, but, when we visited the medieval rooms, I was wonderstruck by the armor and weapons. First, I was surprised to see, from the armor, how short the adult males were. But I was shocked and fascinated by the weapons—the huge broadswords (for those short men), the wriggly knives, the variety of vicious clubs, the ball and chain with the nails in it. And the iron maiden—a hinged human figure filled with spikes that impaled the enclosed victim! I was amazed even then by the amount of imagination that men had invested in ways to hurt men.

Modern weaponry shows what real application can do; manifold are the instances. *Lebanon* is a taciturn comment on one of the chief uses in history of human ingenuity. As we see here, a sizable part of that magnificence has always been employed in the anti-human.

The four main actors are Yoav Donat (the commander), Itay Tiran, Oshri Cohen, and Michael Moshonov—all convincing. The Syrian prisoner is forcefully played by Dudu Tassa: the Phalangist is relished by Ashraf Barhom. One bother is an early scene where we see a mother in a Lebanese village frantically distraught by the loss of her child. The woman looks more like an actress than a villager. But in sum, Maoz, whatever the emphases in his memory, has fashioned a powerful ex post facto documentary.

To a quite different universe. The French director Jacques Rivette presents a new film called *Around a Small Mountain*, and the first point about it is that it exists. Rivette was born in 1928. In recent months we have seen new films from Agnès Varda and Alain Resnais, both in their eighties. Jokes about French food aside, the nourishment presumably comes from French film culture.

Rivette's career has not only been long: it has been widely if not constantly celebrated. He was of course a member of the New Wave—in fact Godard and Truffaut performed in one of his early shorts—and also a critic. For a few years in the 1960s he was the editor-in-chief of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. His first film to attract wide attention was *Céline and Julie Go Boating*, whose length and disregard of cinema convention were admired by many and discussed by even more. Adventurous he has remained during a busy life, his catalogue particularly notable for his unusual, almost paradoxical interest in both theater protocol and film bohemianism. (*L'Amour Fou*, rhapsodically cinematic, is nonetheless built around a theater's rehearsals of Racine's *Andromaque*.) My own favorite Rivette, of the relatively small number that I have seen, is the four-hour version of *La Belle Noiseuse*, based on a short story by Balzac, which concentrates on

ANTHONY RUSSO

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an artist painting a nude. It was subsequently issued in a shorter version that seemed longer. His last film, *The Duchess of Langeais*, had tasty period style.

Rivette says that his new work derives from an idea in Raymond Roussel, a novelist and poet especially marked by his dreamlike qualities. The viewer, who will not know this fact, will anyway note the film's dreamlike quality very early. Take the seemingly commonplace opening sequence. On a pleasant summer day, on a deserted country road, a woman of a certain age is standing by her car, the hood lifted. A man drives by in a roadster, and she gestures to him that she needs help. He keeps driving. She goes back to looking at her motor. In ten seconds or so, the roadster returns. The man gets out, inspects the motor, and soon fixes it. Commonplace? Gary Cooper and Marlene Dietrich in *Desire*? Look again.

At the start the woman, alone and clearly incompetent in mechanics, is not especially upset, though she is stuck. She is almost amused, almost accepting. The roadster drives by, ignoring her. Again she is not especially upset: she simply seems patient. Then the man comes back, which doesn't especially surprise her. He gets out and fixes her motor—and not one word is spoken between them, neither of his regret at passing her nor of her gratitude. The sequence seems Rivette's super-subtle means of telling us that the sequence is realism, but not really.

Soon after, the man—Vittorio, we learn, an Italian—accidentally meets the woman, Kate, in a nearby town where there is a small touring circus to which she is attached. As soon as we see the circus, we know we are entering deeper into some sort of symbolism or allegory. What else are circuses for? Rivette and his co-writers fill the bill. Essentially the film soon takes on the teasing credibility of a dream—not because of anything gauzy or misty on screen, but because odd things keep happening that are unexplained yet that everyone there takes for granted.

Facts are only momentary rest spots along the film's figurative balloon journey. We see a clown act—several times—that has been performed for years by the same men. (A nod to theater.) We see torches juggled, acrobatics; we even see Kate, though she is not currently working in the show, practicing a tightrope act at low level. Vittorio, who is in a way our vicar, investigating and exploring, is himself drafted into performing.

But who supports this circus, which is virtually unattended? Where is the crew that manages the tents and so forth? Kate is here only for a sort of commemorative visit about something that happened fifteen years ago, but how did she get to be a successful Parisian stylist, which we also glimpse? After a while, she has to go back to Paris on business, but she returns to the circus because of a phone call from Vittorio. Yet she is not especially intimate with him. And who is he? He hangs around the circus for ten days, and all we know about him is that he is going from Milan to Barcelona and is not in a hurry.

The film floats us along so seductively that we almost feel ashamed for the questions, as we might be in a private dream. At the end, or near it, all the major characters, except Kate, come out through curtains and bow to us. Possibly this is Rivette's thanks to the theater, which has so often inhabited this cineaste's films. With his good directorial eye, he has encouraged Irina Lubtchansky, the cinematographer, to use colors that are both theatrical and abstract.

Sergio Castellitto, who plays Vittorio, is casual, mature, knowing but uncynical, attractive in a relaxed way. Kate is played by Jane Birkin, who has become a different woman. Anglo-French, she first drew notice as one of the young models in Antonioni's *Blow-Up* and was frequently seen thereafter in both British and French films. Always she seemed to be trying too hard, light or grave. She has now grown into an intricate, quietly humorous, tacitly deep person. This is the first time I ever wanted to see her again.

And what is it all an allegory of? Matters of loss figure in Kate's life—especially in two soliloquies—and other lives have some wrinkles, but principally the film's being is simply because of Rivette's pleasure in dreaming. How pleasantly irresponsible it is to watch a film in which nothing is fantastic yet which is never much more solid than fantasy. Like most dreams, this film is only a temporary habitation, but it is contrived for us by an experienced dreamer. ◆

Jed Perl on Art

INDIVIDUALISM

The astonishing variety of modern art, by turns bewitching and confounding, has been brought into the sharpest imaginable relief by exhibitions this summer in New York and Philadelphia. At the Museum of Modern Art, "Matisse: Radical Invention, 1913–1917" highlights the audacious asceticism that the painter whom many regard as the greatest artist of modern times was pursuing immediately before and during World War I. At the Philadelphia Museum of Art, "Renoir in the 20th Century" culminates in the glorious excess of the canvases that the aging Impressionist, an artist the middle-aged Matisse admired enormously, completed in the years leading up to his death in 1919. On the face of it, the works in these exhibitions could not have less in common; they appear to inhabit different universes, so much so that many observers cannot see why Matisse was interested in Renoir. With Matisse, you have pared-down geometries and monastic tonalities. With Renoir, you have melting arabesques and perfervid color. Look again, though, and you may begin to suspect that the extremity of Matisse's and Renoir's positions suggest two ways of achieving the same goal, which is total artistic freedom. In their utterly different ways, they were reaching for a hyperbolic vision.

MATISSE: RADICAL INVENTION, 1913–1917
Museum of Modern Art

RENOIR IN THE 20TH CENTURY
Philadelphia Museum of Art

There are sound historical reasons to make a comparison between the work that Matisse and Renoir were doing in the years around World War I, for the impact of Renoir's compositional and coloristic strategies on a younger generation can be traced through many canvases not only by Matisse but also by Picasso, Braque, and Bonnard. And this is a case where the historical record has powerful contemporary resonances, because the whole question of how we understand the variety of early twentieth-century art has implications for the way we understand the variety of early twenty-first-century art. However one chooses to describe the combination of forces that were shaping artistic expression in the decades after 1900, the result was a stylistic pluralism unprecedented in the West. Look at the work done between 1900 and 1925—by Cézanne, Monet,

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Renoir, Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Bonnard, Beckmann, Brancusi, Kandinsky, Mondrian, Malevich, Chagall, Miró—and you will find a range of visions that are not easy to reconcile and that often reflect qualities of nostalgia, eclecticism, impurity, and ambiguity that by many people's lights are inherently antimodern. The strangest thing about the pluralism of early twentieth-century art, at least from our vantage point, is that it brings to mind the dissonance and the diversity that we associate with our own moment, which is commonly referred to as postmodern.

The idea of early twentieth-century art as a coherent evolution, propounded by historians and critics for a hundred years, may well be a phantasm. Certainly there is now widespread agreement that the view of modern art as an evolution toward abstraction does not fit the facts. And the realization that the modern adventure may not lead us in any particular direction, confounding as it is in certain respects, helps us begin to grapple with our own late-modern confusions. If *they* did not know where they were headed, why on earth should we know where we have arrived—or if we have arrived anywhere at all? But the case is more curious still, because somehow the early moderns, even without some overarching sense of order, managed to approach the challenges that their work posed with considerable confidence. What explains their self-assurance? If Picasso, Brancusi, Bonnard, and Mondrian were inventing everything for themselves, figuring it out as they went along, what was it that steadied them and guided them? And how do we explain the way this healthy eclecticism degenerated into the rancid promiscuity that characterizes so much of the contemporary scene?

For answers to these questions, we need to look to the artists. There is probably nothing that takes us closer to an explanation than one of Matisse's observations toward the end of his "Notes of a Painter," the extraordinarily intrepid essay that he published in 1908. "Rules," Matisse explains, "have no existence outside of individuals." This is a fascinating statement, on the face of it clear and succinct, but enclosing what amounts to an enormous conundrum. Aren't rules arrived at through some communal or historical process, so that by their very nature they are general, and therefore transcend the individual? True enough. But Matisse believes that the meaning or the value of a rule depends entirely on what the individual can make of it. "Any one of us," Matisse observes, "is capable of repeating fine maxims, but few can also penetrate their meaning."

When it comes to setting the rules, it is every artist for himself. "I am ready to admit," Matisse writes, "that from a study of the works of Raphael or Titian a more complete set of rules can be drawn than from the works of Manet or Renoir, but the rules followed by Manet and Renoir were those which suited their temperaments." For all the talk of rules, there is something very risky, almost anarchic in Matisse's thinking, for he is arguing that an artist must choose the rules that he lives by, and that those rules will only have meaning insofar as they accord with his temperament. So perhaps what links Bonnard, Mondrian, Brancusi, Picasso, and Monet—what makes them part of a shared experiment, however various the results—is that each artist has developed a set of rules that make sense for him as an individual.

"Matisse: Radical Invention, 1913–1917" traces what is without a doubt the period when Matisse was most insistently testing the extent to which rules can be transformed or traduced in an effort to remain true to one's own temperament. It is a portrait of the artist not necessarily as a rule-breaker but as a man who is searching for the rules that are right for him now. The exhibition was organized by John Elderfield, chief curator emeritus of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, and Stephanie D'Alessandro, Gary C. and Frances Comer curator of modern art at the Art Institute of Chicago, where the show was mounted this spring. What D'Alessandro and Elderfield see as a key picture, the disquieting, darkly Arcadian *Bathers by a River*, is in the Art Institute's collection, and the extraordinarily lengthy discussion in the catalogue of this painting turns the exhibition into something of a salute to one of the Art Institute's major treasures.

From the vantage point of the Museum of Modern Art, "Matisse: Radical Invention" offers a close-up view of the artist's work during a period that MoMA has long emphasized in its permanent collection. For Elderfield, who is by any reckoning closer to the end of his curatorial career than to the beginning, the exhibition may have some of the quality of a swan song. He is once again drawing our attention to those moments when it looked as if Matisse might abandon nature entirely, a move that according to some people confirms the old progressivist vision of modern art.

In "Matisse: Radical Invention" we see Matisse plunging into an orgy of denials—an exercise in counter-sensualism, which yields its own kind of sensualism. He is in a less-is-more mood, fired by his romantic anxiety rather than by any yearning for serenity. Subtraction becomes the great theme of the exhibition. Although Matisse never painted an abstract painting, he is frequently pushing his work to the brink of abstraction, seeing how much of nature he can do without while still sustaining the essential experience of the world, whether the subject is a figure, a landscape, or his studio. The process is not so much logical as it is intuitive, speculative, contemplative. The overload of color that had characterized his Fauve paintings and the canvases precipitated by his visits to Morocco is by and large reduced, either to orchestrations of grays or to an all-over effect. And the essential structures of bodies and of spaces are pared down, as if Matisse were seeing how little of the world he needed in order to hold the world together. In *Woman on a High Stool*, a back leg of the stool evaporates, and there is a table that appears to be missing three of its legs. In *The Italian Woman*, Matisse feels free to simply wipe away the dark-haired model's right shoulder. In *View of Notre-Dame*, the Parisian vista from his studio on the Quai Saint-Michel is reduced to little more than a few black lines scrawled on a surface of blue.

The atmosphere in much of the work that Matisse was doing just before and during World War I is impulsive yet saturnine, aggressively casual and self-consciously deliberate, not quite like anything else in modern art, or for that matter in any art. We have what D'Alessandro and Elderfield describe as a period of "experimentation and flux as much as any solid sense of definition or unity. It was, in fact, his radical, unbridled, and ambitious invention, rather than any formal characteristic or subject, that defined his efforts." Matisse embraced what Merleau-Ponty, a generation later, called "Cézanne's doubt" before the phenomenon of nature, and he lingered over and taxonomized those doubts. The results are very strange indeed. There are many works here—including *Flowers and Ceramic Plate* and *The Rose Marble Table*—that I would count as outright failures, so idiosyncratic in their abstinences and obfuscations as to defy the viewer's experience. And when the result is ravishingly beautiful—and nothing here is more beautiful than *The Piano Lesson*, one of MoMA's treasures—it is not that the confusions

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are overcome so much as that they are formalized, turned into the most exquisite enigmas the world has ever seen. *The Piano Lesson* feels cool and classical, but its classicism is unresolved and somehow unresolvable—ultimately confounding. With its sweeping diagonal, implacable right angles, and eccentric passages of rococo scrollwork, *The Piano Lesson* is an equation of great elegance and even greater impenetrability.

D'Alessandro and Elderfield want to probe the nature of Matisse's imagination. They want to reveal his experimental method. Their approach, which is perhaps better grasped in the catalogue than on the walls of the galleries, involves understanding not only what the canvases look like today, but also what they looked like before they were finished, and how they changed over periods of weeks or months and in some cases years. The curators have studied vintage photographs taken while certain works were in progress. They have used x-radiographs and infrared reflectograms to attempt to see what is under the surface and to establish the appearance of earlier versions. In the case of the series of monumental sculptures of backs that Matisse was working on at the time, they have produced digital models to show how he altered the relief in various areas. And they have experimented with digital recreations of what they believe are lost states of paintings. In the case of *Bathers by the River*, the huge study of four enigmatic, faceless nymphs that Matisse worked on off and on between 1909 and 1917, they have used a combination of vintage photographs and x-radiographs and microscopic analysis of the painting as it is today to establish what they believe are six distinct states, which are presented in the catalogue as six separate entries interspersed chronologically, as if those five earlier versions of the painting actually did exist.

There is something affecting about the zeal with which D'Alessandro and Elderfield labor to uncover the method behind what sometimes seems like Matisse's madness. There is a conviction here that if only we can see the changes that have been wreaked on these canvases, we will know what was going on in the artist's mind. I can sympathize with their yearning. And this fascination with process is at least in part supported by Matisse's own practice, for he did indeed from time to time see that photographs were taken of various states of his works. But the pursuit of what is hidden from view is taken to such extremes by D'Alessandro and Elderfield that the hunt takes on a life of its own, until the catalogue begins to suggest a modernist version of *The Da Vinci Code*.

I am not convinced that x-radiographs and other scientific methods of analysis yield as much reliable information as curators would like us to believe. And even if they have managed to track certain transformations with a reasonable degree of accuracy, we are left with the question of whether knowing where certain lines or colors were once located gets us any closer to understanding what has gone on in the privacy of Matisse's imagination. There is a limit to what the rejected operations of the hand tell us about the ongoing operations of the mind. There is an ideology behind what D'Alessandro and Elderfield would like us to accept as impartial scientific method, a fetishizing of process, a belief that the reality of the painting is not the reality we see with the naked eye. In the case of *Bathers by the River*, D'Alessandro and Elderfield seem to want to resurrect Matisse's abandoned versions as freestanding works. In doing so, aren't they undermining the very concept of artistic completeness?

There is no question that Matisse wished to cultivate an atmosphere of doubt in many of the paintings and drawings of these years. When he leaves certain lines and color shapes only half obscured, he is making a conscious decision to reveal some of his doubts. He is drawing us into his own questing, inquiring, even skeptical spirit. At the same time, he does know where he wants to go, which is in the direction of a new kind of lyricism—a neurotic lyricism, an anxious lyricism. I am not sure that we are brought any closer to an understanding of Matisse's doubts when they are complicated by the curators' speculations. And their speculations tend to lead only in certain directions. Matisse often alternated between works that were more or less naturalistic and more or less abstract, setting up a wholly original dialectic as he tried to figure out exactly what it was he wanted. But D'Alessandro and Elderfield are inclined to exclude the more naturalistic works, probably because they do not fit in with the "radical invention" of their title.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *The Concert*, 1919

Thus the show includes the magnificently telegraphic *Studio, Quai Saint-Michel*, with its haiku-precise evocation of Parisian light, but none of the bluntly sculptural paintings, done at the same time, of Laurette, the model who reclines on the bed in that studio. I know that it can be difficult to borrow certain paintings, but the absence of those works is symptomatic of a more general unwillingness to admit how often Matisse's will toward abstraction is grounded in or even contradicted by his will toward representation. When it comes to favoring more forcefully simplified or abstracted paintings, the curators do not hesitate to violate the very terms of their show: it is said to cover the period 1913–1917,

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but for reasons that are rather difficult to understand it begins with paintings done in 1907. I imagine D'Alessandro and Elderfield got to the point where they included anything that evinced what they regard as "radical invention," and to hell with the dates.

At the very outset of the catalogue, D'Alessandro and Elderfield explain that they place great store on Matisse's concern with what the artist called "the methods of modern construction." They would say that all their x-radiographs and digital reconstructions are meant to reveal those methods. By the time I made it to the end of the catalogue, I felt a little sorry for the curators, because nearly everything they show us about Matisse's practice leads away from the rationality suggested by "the methods of modern construction." For all Matisse's evident fascination with the rule book, it sometimes seems that he is wondering if there are any rules at all that he can live by. It is important to remember that in the period covered by this exhibition, avant-gardism was already spawning its own academies. If Matisse was rejecting the high-keyed complementary color associated with Fauvism, it was surely in part because that color had already descended into kitsch in the hands of countless imitators. As for the interest that Matisse takes in Cubism, his variations on Cubist construction are so aggressively improvisational as to register as a Dadaist riposte to the theorizing of Cubism that, to the dismay of Picasso and Braque, was already flourishing in the writings of Gleizes and Metzinger and others.

Perhaps the best way to understand the spirit that animated Matisse in the years immediately before and during World War I is by looking at a remark he made thirty years later in the text for *Jazz*, his magnificent album of cut paper compositions. "The artist must never be a prisoner," he explains. "An artist must never be a prisoner of himself, prisoner of a style, prisoner of a reputation, prisoner of a success." What D'Alessandro and Elderfield are perhaps reluctant to admit is that what they call "radical invention" could itself become a prison, and that the classical completeness Matisse pursued at certain points in the 1920s could feel like a new kind of freedom. Of course that is not the end of the story. Classicism could in turn become a prison. And so it went, until in his seventies Matisse was carving with scissors into pieces of colored paper.

THIS INSISTENCE that "the artist must never be a prisoner" is a key to understanding the fascination that Renoir exerted on Matisse, as he did on a large number of artists and adventuresome collectors in the early twentieth century. In the years after 1910, Renoir, who was then in his seventies, refused to be a prisoner either of his own earlier career or of contemporary taste. He had abandoned the Impressionist method of dissolving the natural world into a surface of flickering color and light. Surely he felt he was now too old to continue as the painter of modern life that he had been when he created *The Luncheon of the Boating Party*, that unrivaled novelistic vision of Parisian pleasures. As for the contemporary taste for slender, long-limbed, angular feminine beauty, Renoir rejected that ideal in favor of a primordial monumentality—a return to the earth mothers of antiquity. Renoir had never felt at home with the sense of dislocation and disillusion that was threaded through the modern movement, and in the last decade of his life, in the very face of World War I and a widespread belief that civilization was falling apart, he dedicated himself to wholeness and fullness and completeness with a Bacchic intensity.

"Renoir in the 20th Century"—which has already been seen at the Grand Palais in Paris and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art—is a curious affair. Claudia Einecke at LACMA and Sylvie Patry at the Orsay, who coordinated the catalogue, have brought together a large cast of curators and historians, some of whom do not seem convinced of the greatness of the work that they are presenting. One of the essays in the catalogue is titled "Why Did Matisse Love Late Renoir?" And although the organizers do not come right out and say it, the show might have been subtitled "Why Does Anybody Love Late Renoir?"

I blame the widespread dismay with which his work is regarded by sophisticated museumgoers on a mistakenly literalist reading of the overblown proportions of his female figures. These over-the-top visions, which point to the essentially anti-naturalistic character of Renoir's Arcadian world, are all too often discussed as if their immense thighs and great rolls of flesh were being presented on some porn site for people with special tastes. I judge this a failure of the museumgoers' imagination. After all, nobody talks about how unsettling it would be to go to bed with the fractured bathers in Cézanne's late canvases, although by any naturalistic standard they may well be infinitely more grotesque than Renoir's creations. The difference, I guess, is that Cézanne's nudes are fragmented, which makes them acceptable to modern taste, while Renoir's are overripe, which to many people suggests kitsch. And kitsch is indeed one of the risks that Renoir takes as he pursues his opulent vision.

The list of artists and connoisseurs who in the first quarter of the twentieth century were embracing Renoir as an essential modern voice is extraordinary. Matisse and Picasso collected his work. In the 1910s and 1920s both of them did many paintings that were deeply affected not only by Renoir's powerfully sculptural vision of the figure, but also by his scintillating color. Braque's paintings of caryatids are closely modeled on compositions by Renoir. Bonnard, who became good friends with Renoir, had a tiny painting that Renoir had given him hanging in his studio until the end of his life; and the color in Renoir's very late paintings is almost a recipe for the color of Bonnard's mature work. Leo Stein and Albert Barnes, essential collectors, were avid admirers of late Renoir; Barnes saw his vision and Cézanne's as closely related. And in the New York home of the legendary collector Walter Arensberg, a small late Renoir nude at one time hung adjacent to Duchamp's *Nude Descending the Staircase*.

Maybe they were all wrong. Maybe Clement Greenberg was only echoing their errors of judgment when he included an essay in praise of Renoir in *Art and Culture*, the only collection of his own work that he himself put together. Or maybe, as the organizers of this exhibition sometimes seem to argue, everybody just felt sorry for the old man who was suffering from rheumatoid arthritis and could go on painting only with the brushes strapped to his hand. In this interpretation, the modern infatuation with late Renoir is an exercise in political correctness, a special disabilities exemption for the guy who did the overblown nudes.

Although "Renoir in the 20th Century" is full of extraordinary works and is beau-

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tifully installed, I do not think it makes the best case for the central canvases of Renoir's last five or ten years. Perhaps the thought behind beginning the show with the more naturalistically oriented paintings of the 1890s was that this would help to ease museumgoers into the unfetteredness of Renoir's ultimate manner. My feeling is that a more tightly focused show would have made a clearer case for Renoir's leap into metamorphosis and mythologization. After spending much of his life painting the world as he saw it, he seems to have decided that he could use paint to give body to a disembodied ideal of beauty—to the intoxication of volumes and colors released from strict rules of representation.

In his final phase, Renoir operates with some of the abandon of a Symbolist poet, splattering rich images here and there, with less concern for their particular meaning than for their general effect. He continues to paint portraits of particular people, frequently studies of women associated with the world of dealers and collectors where he was revered, and he conceives of these figures in the sort of fantastical metaphoric terms that we know from Proust's salutes to the heroines of the Guermantes Way. He transforms Madame Gaston Bernheim de Villers in her feathered hat into a gorgeous blue-eyed goddess, perhaps the Queen of the Feathered Kingdom. Madame Thurneyssen, an important German collector who is shown holding her young daughter, becomes a fertility goddess.

There is a what-the-hell freedom about the work that Renoir did from around 1910 until his death in 1919. He had never been susceptible to the doubts and anxieties that are often seen as characteristic of the modern artist, and in the end he becomes a glorious monster of optimistic hedonism. He paints the young son of the Thurneyssen family as an androgynous shepherd, naked except for a straw hat and an animal skin, suggesting a pan-sexuality that confounds conventional interpretations of his erotic agenda. Impossibly crippled, Renoir nonetheless turned his attention to the third dimension, guiding a series of young assistants who helped him to construct figures that are climactic achievements in twentieth-century sculpture and surely inspired Matisse's equally monumentalizing efforts in this direction. In the Philadelphia show, the turning point comes with a small canvas, *Gabrielle with a Rose*, in which the woman who had been his son Jean's nursemaid and became a favorite model is the occasion for an essay in the transformation of paint into hair, flesh, flower, fabric. The result is a shivering, shimmering romanticism. To turn from the beatific woman in this painting to a photograph of Gabrielle Renard in the catalogue, where her features look hard and sharp, is to realize that Renoir has entered a realm of fantasy. He is painting not what he sees but what he wants to see.

In the last couple of years of his life, Renoir's color is keyed-up and cacophonous. He is now painting not in red, orange, yellow, blue, green, gray, and white, but in carnelian, copper, gold, lapis, jade, pewter, and silver. Applied in brief, gentle strokes, with colors dabbed over one another and often a topping of white flicks, the colors swim and hover, forming arms, backs, flowers, hair, lips, fabrics, grasses, bits of sky. The Philadelphia exhibition concludes rhapsodically, with studies of women in loose-fitting, vaguely North African robes and turbans and the final *Bathers*, which some regard as his crowning achievement, although I think I prefer another climactic work, *The Concert*. In both paintings Renoir weaves his fantasy around two women—one a reddish blonde, the other a brunette. There are roses everywhere in *The Concert*, a study of the two women seated indoors in flowing robes, one playing a mandolin, the other listening. There are roses in a vase and roses in the women's hair and roses on the wallpaper. And they are the key to a painting that itself unfolds like the petals of a rose. Renoir examines arms, hands, necks, faces, and fabrics with the loving seriousness with which a lover might study the gift of a rose. Who are these women? What are they doing? Yes, the blonde one has her fingers on the mandolin. Yes, the brunette appears to be listening. But here sound, smell, touch, and above all sight are as detached from fixed expectations as Renoir's anatomy is sometimes detached from the facts of the human body. The painting is a slowly unfolding paroxysm—sensation for sensation's sake, and in this sense thoroughly modern. Here Renoir links arms with Titian. Not even Titian's *Rape of Europa* is a better painting than the Renoirs in this final room.

Matisse visited Renoir in the last years of his life, and after Renoir's death he spent time in the old man's studio, studying the canvases of the master's final phase. That a painter of modern life such as Renoir should have become a painter of Arcadian myth suggested that an artist had to keep reinventing the rules that he would live by. This was an important lesson for Matisse and Picasso and Braque, who had pushed art to the brink of abstraction and now found themselves rethinking a set of rules they had helped to invent but were not sure they could live by. A few paintings by Matisse, Picasso, and Bonnard have been included in "Renoir in the 20th Century," and they point to a rich history of borrowings and inspirations.

These are matters of historical record, but how one chooses to interpret them is another question entirely. The most common way to describe the more or less simultaneous creation of Matisse's most ascetic paintings and Renoir's most opulent paintings is in terms of a clash of radical and conservative tendencies. By this logic, Matisse is a radical artist in 1915 who becomes a conservative artist in the 1920s, after which he is radicalized again. But it seems to me that the language of advances and retreats, which is as old as modern art, is incapable of explaining what actually matters to us in a work of art—in any work of art. "Radical Invention" would be as good a title for the show that is now in Philadelphia as it is for the Matisse show currently at the Museum of Modern Art. Words such as "radical" and "conservative" should be used with great discretion, at least when it comes to the arts, because otherwise they force us into the straitjacket of ideology. They turn a work of art into a judgment of the world, about what the world is or ought to be. And although works of art surely tell us a great deal about our experience, their value has everything to do with their remoteness from the impulse to dictate or to legislate, which is the ideological impulse. Matisse's asceticism and Renoir's opulence are personal matters—matters of considerable consequence precisely because they are personal.

What is very interesting about both "Matisse: Radical Invention" and "Renoir in the 20th Century" is the extent to which the organizers appear to feel somewhat unsure about the lessons that might be drawn from these exhibitions. If the curators of the Renoir show seem at moments to wonder why they got themselves into this in the first place, D'Alessandro and Elderfield, in their infinitely subtler and more sophisticated way, seem uncertain about the nature of Matisse's radicalism. The more the scholars struggle to fit Renoir and Matisse into one or another old modern scheme—into some theory of avant-garde and rearguard actions—the more the artists appear alienated from any art-historical program. I found something poignant, almost bittersweet, about the catalogue of the Matisse show,

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because in spite of all that D'Alessandro and Elderfield have done to reveal the nature of Matisse's radicalism, he slips past them. *The Piano Lesson* is not a radical painting so much as it is a painting with a particular atmosphere, a particular perfume. And the wonder of "Renoir in the 20th Century" is that whatever the organizers' doubts, there comes a point in the exhibition when the paintings are telling their own story and all the theories of modernism fall by the wayside.

Could it be that we are approaching a promising turn in our understanding of modern art? Certainly there are fewer people who any longer believe in the old orthodoxies of modernist history, in the narratives that turn artistic achievement into a matter of radical advances and conservative retreats. But do we have the courage to live without all the theories of the avant-garde, and without the comforting habit of labeling paintings as radical or conservative? If we give such categories up, we are left with what Matisse called the individual temperament, and the struggle of that individual temperament to discover the rules that will make it possible to construct a work of art. "My destination is always the same," Matisse declared in "Notes of a Painter." "But I do not think exactly the way I thought yesterday."

How are artists to judge the quality of their own thinking if it keeps changing? And how are we to judge what artists are doing if we cannot locate their work on some chart that tracks radical and conservative developments? These are the great questions that are raised by "Matisse: Radical Invention" and "Renoir in the 20th Century." They are questions that have yet to be adequately answered. Perhaps now is the time to try. We have had far too many theories of the avant-garde and far too few attempts to understand the nature of the modern artistic temperament. ◆

Richard A. Posner
JUST FRIENDS

THE FACEBOOK EFFECT: THE INSIDE STORY OF THE COMPANY THAT IS CONNECTING THE WORLD
By David Kirkpatrick
(Simon & Schuster, 372 pp., $26)

Facebook is a phenomenon. Its founder and principal owner and chief executive officer, Mark Zuckerberg, is another phenomenon. The rise of these linked phenomena is well narrated in *The Facebook Effect*, written by an experienced technology journalist who seems to have been given total access to everyone connected with the company, including Zuckerberg. The book is not entirely uncritical, but it is apparent that Kirkpatrick is awed by the twin phenomena. There is a hint of this in his subtitle, and when he says such things as "Facebook is bringing the world together."

He should be awed. Facebook was created in 2004 by a nineteen-year-old Harvard sophomore and a few of his classmates, as an online social network for Harvard students. It quickly spread beyond Harvard and within ten months it had a million subscribers (or "Facebook users," as they are called). Today it has nearly 500 million users. About 40 percent of the population of the United States now uses Facebook, but the use of it is even greater in some foreign countries, such as Canada (42 percent) and, more surprisingly perhaps, Norway (45 percent). The company is worth about $15 billion—or maybe twice that; since its stock is not publicly traded, its value is hard to estimate. Zuckerberg, who dropped out of Harvard after his sophomore year, owns one-quarter of the company's stock. He has just turned twenty-six.

He started out as a computer whiz—and the heart of an online network is indeed its computer software. The earliest software for Facebook was written by Zuckerberg and his pals; it is a weakness of Kirkpatrick's otherwise very good book that he does not explain the role of their software skills in Facebook's success. It is clear that Zuckerberg, like that other Harvard dropout Bill Gates, is a business genius, but it is unclear how much of the company's success is due to his or his companions' computer skills. Probably little, in the sense that with enough money he could have hired software engineers to create the software needed to translate his vision into a product—but he did not have the money when he started. (He soon gave up programming.)

Zuckerberg, again like Gates, was unusual among young entrepreneurs in the software industry in deciding to retain control of the company even after it had become a large business. When a promising new business hits its stride, the common practice has been for its founder to turn to venture capitalists for the money required to sustain its growth. They bring in an experienced businessman to be the CEO and the founder loses control, though often he is richly remunerated when the grown-ups now in charge take the company public. Zuckerberg could have followed this route and become a retired billionaire in his twenties. He refused, in part because he is not (so far as one can judge) driven by a desire to be rich. This may change as he gets older, but for now he is a visionary, and his vision is of people who build mutual trust, and enrich their lives, by revealing their inner selves to each other. "Facebook is founded," Kirkpatrick explains, "on a radical social premise—that an inevitable enveloping transparency will overtake modern life. . . . Facebook is causing a mass resetting of the boundaries of personal intimacy."

Since connecting hundreds of millions of people with their social and business acquaintances online requires thousands of servers (computers that store content and pass online messages from the senders to the intended recipients), other equipment, and eventually a large data center and a highly paid staff, and since charging people a fee to join Facebook would slow the growth of the network, Facebook needs advertising revenues and so must operate as a business. "While Zuckerberg had been forced by circumstances to accept advertising," Kirkpatrick reports, "he did so only so he could pay the bills." Not that an advertising-supported online social network could not in principle be operated in the not-for-profit form; but philanthropists would not have contributed funds to support a kid's dream of what would have struck them as just an online dating service. Zuckerberg has had to raise money from time to time to finance the growth of Facebook, and he could do so only in a business format, which would enable him to offer stock in the company to investors.

The idea of an online social network is simple, even obvious—Kirkpatrick cites an article from 1968 expounding the idea long before it was technologically feasible. Such networks were already up and running—MySpace

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was the biggest—when Zuckerberg started Facebook. A user has a profile page on which he posts whatever information about himself he thinks might interest people with whom he has—or would like to have—a relationship. (The relationship need not be social, of course: as Facebook has developed, it often is a business relationship.) He gives them access to his page and they give him access to theirs. That is the basic model, but Zuckerberg made a number of decisions at the outset that proved to be prescient. The first (quickly abandoned, but important at Facebook's beginning) was to make it a network just for Harvard students, because they would be intensely interested in each other and perhaps suspicious or dismissive of outsiders. The second decision was to require every Facebook user to register under his real name (and to provide an e-mail address to assist Facebook in verifying his identity): there would be no pseudonymous role-playing, as in so many online social networks.

Moreover, anyone who wanted access to a user's Facebook page had to get the user to "friend" him, and the user could "defriend" him at will. In this way the user controlled access to his own site. This, in the universe of Facebook, is a precondition to intimacy, or "radical transparency," among friends, and it has proved to be a big factor in the success of Facebook abroad. "You only see friends," Kirkpatrick remarks. "Italy's Facebook-using hordes, for example, could grow to many millions without often seeing anyone who wasn't Italian." To be a "friend"—this was another one of the prescient early decisions—you have to register on Facebook, and having become a Facebook user you may start inviting people to be your "friend"; but for them to become your "friend," they must join Facebook and thereby become Facebook users as well, and in this way the network can expand exponentially..

Facebook was also determined to prevent interruptions in service. An earlier and rather similar online social network, called Friendster, had failed to gain a significant following largely because of service failures. (Timing is all: an online network could not "scale" until the software and associated technology had evolved to the point at which service failures could be minimized.) And finally, consistent with the presumed dignity of Harvard (though the standard uniform of Zuckerberg and his classmates was Nikes, jeans, t-shirts, and fleece vests), the Facebook format was and is sober, simple, uncluttered. It makes users feel sophisticated.

Facebook filled a void at Harvard. It is a large school and most of the students, especially those newly enrolled, know few other students. Facebook provided a free, rapid, and effective way of getting to know many more of one's fellow students than would be possible through personal contacts. You got not only their name and picture, but also such personal information as what classes they were taking, where they were from, and what their interests were. And so Facebook spread like wildfire at Harvard.

Students at other elite colleges (some of which already had online social networks, but none so cleverly designed as Facebook) took note and soon were clamoring for Facebook. Its Harvard origin proved serendipitous: an online social network created by and for Harvard students had cachet. So Zuckerberg offered Facebook at the other elite colleges, and it took off at those schools just as it had at Harvard. Students at less elite colleges now began demanding Facebook. The question of whether their students should be allowed to join was a critical issue for the new company, the first of many that Zuckerberg faced. Some of his associates worried that the democratization of Facebook would tarnish the brand. But Zuckerberg decided to take a chance and open Facebook to all college students. It worked. The next question was whether to make Facebook available to high school students. This provoked heightened concern for the brand, but again Zuckerberg overrode the doubters and was vindicated.

Doubts soared when the question then arose whether to open Facebook to everyone. Zuckerberg's co-venturers were worried not only about diluting the brand but also about where to find the money to buy the large number of servers that would be required to handle such an increase in users. Daily communications across the Facebook network could be expected to climb into the tens of billions. Advertising revenue was not keeping pace with the breakneck expansion in usage, in part because of restrictions that Zuckerberg—remember that he regards advertising as a necessary evil—imposed upon it. Unfazed, he decreed the opening of the network to everyone in the world at least thirteen years old, and the revenues caught up.

At the same time that the network was expanding, the programs running on it were multiplying. Zuckerberg decided to allow anyone to write programs that would run on the network ("applications"). The programmer would not need Facebook's permission or have to pay a fee, although Facebook reserved the right to remove programs that it did not like. Soon there were many thousands of programs (for making gifts, for video, for this, for that) that a user could add to his or her profile. Facebook profiles could thus be optimized for an immense variety of uses, including business uses. A lawyer of my acquaintance estimates that his Facebook page, which links him to more than two thousand "friends," has increased his income (at no cost, except the ten or fifteen minutes that he spends each day reading and posting entries) by at least $100,000 since he became a Facebook user. (The number of "friends" of an individual Facebook user is limited to five thousand, apparently to deter spammers.)

Zuckerberg has made mistakes along the way, and he has sometimes been slow to correct them. Facebook's much-publicized breaches of users' privacy have hurt it. But although he is no great fan of privacy, Zuckerberg was from the start committed to preventing unauthorized access to a person's Facebook page. This is easier said than done, however, owing to the Internet's inherent insecurity, and to the tension between protecting privacy and maximizing advertising revenues. Facebook needs those revenues to finance its increasingly costly network—and what makes Facebook valuable to advertisers is precisely the immensity of the information about its users that is stored on its servers. Advertisers are avid for such information so that they can pinpoint their advertising. Kirkpatrick reports that Interscope Records, for example, wanting to advertise a song about cheerleading, "could be given a guarantee—its ad [on Facebook] would only be seen by college girls who are either cheerleaders or who have mentioned something about cheerleading in their profiles." Interscope paid Facebook nothing for any "wasted" advertising—advertising to anyone outside the target audience. Advertising on Facebook has turned out to provide potent competition to the mighty Google, because Facebook has more information about its users from their Facebook activities than Google has about its users from their Google clicks.

There is no necessary compromise of personal privacy when Facebook merely aggregates the data that its computers find on Facebook pages into a demographic profile, such as cheerleaders and would-be cheerleaders. But Facebook got into trouble with a program called Beacon, which, unless the Facebook

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user opted out, allowed "friends" to see his purchase orders from select advertisers. Many Facebook users did not notice the opt-out feature. Kirkpatrick recounts the sad story of the man who bought a ring as a surprise Christmas present for his wife, but the report of the purchase order showed up on her Facebook page and spoiled the surprise. Perhaps worse, the report showed that he had gotten the ring at a 51 percent discount. Facebook canceled Beacon shortly afterward.

The meteoric rise of Facebook raises four general questions (none analyzed by Kirkpatrick, whose focus is on the struggle to make Facebook a viable business). How is it possible for a teenager, however brilliant, to create a multibillion-dollar online business in such a short time? How likely is such a business to flame out? What, if any, legal protection from competition should be given to the ideas that power these businesses? And how far will social networking erode privacy or have other social consequences, good or bad?

That a teenager should have invented Facebook—rather than, for example, the Harvard administration doing so—is not surprising. There have always been teenage prodigies. Teenagers can excel at activities that require only abstract skills, such as math or computer science, and they have experiences and therefore insights that adults lack. Zuckerberg had both the skills and the experiences, and both these assets were important to Facebook's creation and success. His generation had grown up with computers and online networking (e-mail is an online network service, as are instant messaging and chat rooms), enabling him to understand the demand for a service such as Facebook better than the people running Harvard, who belonged to an earlier generation. He could even understand the latent demand of adults for such a service better, because he knew and they did not what the service might look like, given advances in computer science.

But this does not explain the vertiginous expansion of Facebook's network. The explanation lies in what are called "network effects." These effects are nicely illustrated by telephony. Suppose there is a single telephone company, at first with only one subscriber. The company's service is initially valueless, because the subscriber has no one with whom to talk. So maybe the company pays people to join. Every time a person joins, the service becomes more valuable because subscribers can reach more people. If now a second telephone company starts up, it will have difficulty competing unless it offers a clearly superior service (or persuades the incumbent to interconnect with it), because its network is so much smaller and the value of its service therefore so much less.

It is the same with a social network. Although almost no one actually wants 500 million online "friends" (well, maybe some advertisers do), the bigger the social network, the more valuable it is to the members. Those Harvard kids had friends at other schools, parents, siblings still in high school, prospective employers, and therefore valued the expansion of Facebook to other colleges and then to high schools and then to everyone. Facebook had to be only a little better than other online social networks to leave them trailing in the dust. For the bigger it grew, the more valuable its service became relative to that of the competing networks. And because joining Facebook is free, the cost of switching to it from another online social network is negligible, especially because the time cost of learning to use Facebook and to move one's social-network files is minimized by Facebook's user-friendly design.

Zuckerberg was well aware of network effects. His objective, says Kirkpatrick, "was to overwhelm all other social networks wherever they are—to win their users and become the de facto standard. In his view it was either that or disappear." That was the business reason for his pushing Facebook relentlessly—and riskily—into more and more markets without waiting for his financial base to firm up.

Another reason that Facebook could grow so big so fast is that online network services are, by big-business standards, cheap to create and to operate. Facebook was launched with an investment of $2,000. Online networks do not require expensive plants (they do not manufacture anything) or huge workforces (they do not have retail outlets and most of their work is automated). They also do not require special terminal equipment: everyone who might be interested in joining an online social network already has access to the Internet from his laptop or mobile phone. So Facebook can get by with 1,400 employees, compared to more than 200,000 for General Motors. Owing to its small size, it has not yet been forced to make an experienced business manager its chief executive officer, or to go public (or sell out to venture capitalists) in order to raise needed capital.

But the cheapness of an online network is a source of competitive weakness as well as strength. When it is very costly to duplicate a network, the first one that comes into existence is likely to obtain a natural monopoly; a second would have to invest heavily to build its network while trying to pry enough users away from the first to make its network grow. But when duplicating a network is cheap, an innovator may be able, by charging a zero price for a superior service (as Facebook does), to eat the existing network's lunch in short order. MySpace, started just a year before Facebook, quickly became the dominant online social network and remained in the top spot until 2007, when Facebook overtook it. (This was a rare victory for refinement: Kirkpatrick remarks upon MySpace's "distinctive Times Square look—all flashing graphics and ribald images." And "you didn't need an invitation from an existing member [to join]. You could use either a real name or a pseudonym.") Last year, MySpace laid off 30 percent of its employees, and its network is now less than a quarter the size of Facebook's. But Twitter is surging, and Kirkpatrick reports that Facebook is worried that Twitter might overcome it. Remember the dictum: either overwhelm all other networks by snatching their users away from them or disappear. There are many Zuckerberg wannabes out there, trying to do to Facebook what he did to MySpace.

There is also concern that Facebook may be only a fad, like Beanie Babies. A soaring demand (think how fast online networks expand compared to high-investment networks such as telephony) for a new good or service may create a bubble phenomenon—people buying because other people (presumed to know what they are doing) are buying. We know what happens to bubbles. And Facebook also has to worry about the aging of its founder and his co-workers. As a start-up company in a rapidly changing economic and technological environment matures, its capacity for radical innovation is bound to diminish. Software programming continues to advance with long strides; but Zuckerberg no longer programs. As the company expands, it will need managers with more experience. They will be older, more cautious, than the current ones. The rising generation will have different tastes and aims; fewer and fewer Facebook employees will

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belong to it. The best young talent will go to work for new companies.

Network competition is a function in part of the scope of patent protection. Software is patentable, but it is usually possible to invent around patented software—that is, to develop non-infringing software that accomplishes the same task. (Different software can produce the same word-processing capability, for example.) The major legal threat to new online social networks comes from a controversial category of patents called "business method" patents. They enable the patenting of a novel method of doing business provided that the method employs technology, such as computer software. The idea of an online social network is too obvious to be patentable (remember that 1968 article), but Facebook is an example of a business method that specifies a distinctive set of features—the set described earlier that explains much of its commercial success.

Yet neither Facebook nor any other online social network should be permitted to obtain patents and thus impede new entry into the online social network market. The rationale for patent protection is that inventors, or the firms that employ them, will not spend large amounts of money to develop a product that a competitor who incurred no development expense can cheaply copy and produce, and thus sell profitably at a lower price than the inventor. (Pharmaceutical drugs are the canonical example of such a product.) Zuckerberg and his friends spent virtually nothing to develop Facebook, as distinct from the costs incurred to operate and to expand the service once it was up and running. The lure of a patent is not necessary to induce abundant and energetic innovation in online social networking. Patents would have blocked Facebook. As it was, Facebook had to settle a patent-infringement suit for a non-trivial sum.

Privacy scandals involving online services, such as e-mail, Google searches, MySpace, and Facebook, are endemic to this universe. Most of them result from inadvertent disclosures by the provider of the service, but they can also arise from the tension between the users of such services and the advertisers. Yet Americans, if one may judge from their behavior (or "revealed preference," in the language of economics), are not greatly worried about advertisers' obtaining personal information about them. Otherwise they would not buy books from Amazon.com or use Gmail. They realize that advertisers are not interested in people's personal information as such and do not want to embarrass their customers; they merely want to sell more stuff.

But online social networks are different. Information revealed to advertisers may, as in the incident involving the Beacon program, leak out to people whom the network user would prefer not see it. Remember that Facebook is entirely dependent on advertising revenues and has had to struggle to bring those revenues in line with its costs, and that Zuckerberg has a relaxed attitude toward privacy. One former Facebook programmer thinks that "Mark doesn't believe in privacy that much, or at least … sees privacy as something Facebook should offer people until they get over their need for it.… Members of Facebook's radical transparency camp, Zuckerberg included, believe more visibility makes us better people … more transparency should make for a more tolerant society in which people eventually accept that everybody sometimes does a bad or embarrassing thing." It is not surprising, therefore, that Facebook has been repeatedly criticized and occasionally sued for carelessly—or maybe even deliberately—compromising its users' privacy. When a user quits Facebook, for example, the company's servers retain all the information that had been posted on the user's Facebook page.

But the more interesting question is whether the reduction in privacy that Facebook users experience—by the very nature of a network that invites people to share personal information, far beyond what is normal or even feasible when friendship arises from personal contact—is a social cost. I have my doubts. I do not share Zuckerberg's utopian expectations for the creation of community by means of Facebook, but I do think that we tend to exaggerate the value of privacy. We do this by failing to distinguish its private value from its social value. Privacy is a powerful weapon that we wield to advance our personal interests. We reveal to others the information about ourselves that advances our projects (marriage, promotion, disability benefits, purchases, and so forth) and try to conceal the information that would retard them. Like actors, we present a manufactured self to the world. (Erving Goffman brilliantly analyzed the performative dimension of social relationships.) And privacy can also be dangerous. In our new age of terrorism, we are more mindful of this than we once were. We wish Al Qaeda were "radically transparent" to us.

And yet it would be crazy to try to impose a general legal duty of candor—to require everyone to post online, accessible to all, every detail of his private life: the kind of information you would have to disclose in a "lifestyle" polygraph exam if you wanted to work for the CIA. We would be drowned in information, much of it confusing and distracting (arresting, but irrelevant). But that is not where Facebook is going; and despite all the snooping technology of modernity, we have more privacy than our ancestors had (urbanization is a big enabler of privacy)—if we want it. And those ancestors seem not to have suffered disabling psychological damage from their relative lack of privacy.

What *is* true is that the less privacy, the more conformism. But it is hard to argue that Facebook is making Americans more conformist, composed as it is of millions of separate, more or less private, social networks. Indeed, social networking may also promote a kind of individualism by enabling (with apologies to Wilde) non-conformists to find each other. Kirkpatrick notes that "Facebook has now become one of the first places dissatisfied people worldwide take their gripes, activism, and protests." But Facebook may be making us more narcissistic. It may do so, as Kirkpatrick rightly observes, by encouraging exhibitionism. "On Facebook we follow the minutiae of our friends' lives the same way millions follow Britney Spears in *People* magazine," Kirkpatrick writes. "The Internet theorist David Weinberger posits that 'on the Web, everybody is famous to 15 people.'"

There is also a legitimate concern that online social networks are an addictive distraction, even that they are altering our brains in a way that is destroying our ability to concentrate. But all that is really clear is that Facebook is taking up an enormous amount of people's time. The company reports that its users spend 500 billion minutes online with Facebook every month, though Kirkpatrick reports a figure half as large. Neither figure includes the time spent by users in taking photos and posting them on their Facebook page. (Facebook hosts some 30 billion photos.) Facebook users were certainly doing *something* with those 250 or 500 billion minutes a month before Facebook came along, and maybe something of greater social value. But who knows? Maybe they were spending that time networking the slow pre-electronic way. Maybe they now have more time for other activities.

We may laugh at Socrates, in the *Phaedrus*, for denouncing literacy, which he said would create "forgetfulness in the

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learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves.... They will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality." But maybe his anxieties about the cultural consequences of communications technology were just premature. Still, I doubt we need worry too much about the effect of Facebook on the psychology or the cognition of its adult users. They each have their social network created mainly the old-fashioned way, and Facebook will help them maintain it. But what about the teenagers, enabled by Facebook to form immense social networks? They are said to be abandoning "best friends" in favor of having looser relations with more friends, a trend surely accelerated by Facebook—if you spend a lot of "face time" with just one or two of your "friends," you will have no time for the other 398 or 399. A Facebook network is a social collective, a virtual kibbutz, and studies have found that children brought up in a traditional kibbutz have difficulty forming strong emotional relationships as adults.

The Pied Piper of Hamelin led one hundred children into a cave from which they never emerged. Some 500 million people, of whom about 10 percent are thirteen to eighteen years old and another 25 percent are eighteen to twenty-five years old, are now marching to the digital pipes of Mark Zuckerberg, who is twenty-six years old. I have no idea where they are marching, and whether they will ever return. ◆

Richard Wolin
THE COUNTER-THINKER

THE TYRANNY OF GUILT: AN ESSAY ON WESTERN MASOCHISM
By Pascal Bruckner
Translated by Steven Rendall
(Princeton University Press, 239 pp., $26.95)

I.

Once upon a time, it seemed an incontestable fact that the life of the mind radiated from the Left Bank outward. Within a small quadrant of the Latin Quarter in Paris, an intellectual elite labored to produce magisterial works that lesser minds all over the world received eagerly, gratefully—and by and large uncritically. It was widely held that the treatises that the French mandarins produced were of world-historical scope and import—that their works clarified and gave shape to the great philosophical and historical and political questions of the day. In this respect the ascendancy of French theory was owed not least to the postwar emergence of an increasingly global intellectual public, and the echo effect was considerable. In the far-flung intellectual hinterlands—that is, for those who were not fortunate enough to live in Paris and its environs—the conviction developed that the latest tome by Sartre, Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, Althusser, or Lacan would provide, for better or for worse, the direction that was desperately sought to re-orient and resurrect a postcolonial world that was careening wildly out of control. The universal intellectual—a French contrivance dating back to the days of Voltaire, Hugo, and Zola—seemed alive and well.

What happened? When did French masters disappear? Why is Paris no longer the capital of advanced thought? The decline—or the change: there are those who feel relieved by the absence of *les maîtres-penseurs*—is undeniable. One common explanation centers on what one might call the altered nature of the conditions of intellectual production. It holds that ours is no longer a world in which great minds count, or count as they once did. In the old days the French university system, with the so-called "grandes écoles" leading the way, was a training ground for intellectual mandarins; but in an age of mass education, the situation has changed dramatically. Instead the market for a new breed of topical and spontaneous journalistic commentary, for media-savvy ways of thinking, has arisen. The result is a half-educated punditry, whose authority derives not from grand and deep literary or philosophical achievements of their own, but from a type of intellectual agility that allows them to meet a semi-distracted, multitasking public halfway. The new intellectual situation was once described by Dominique Lecourt, in a clever pun, as "the mediocracy."

Another partial explanation derives from the fact that French culture, like that of other European eminences, has simply lost its formerly uncontested centrality. The process of decolonization and the concomitant rise of multiculturalism have resulted in a surfeit of competing cultural claims. By degrees, the ideal of cultural excellence, which at one point seemed more or less self-evident, has ceded to an overextended and anthropological definition of culture: the idea of culture as the "expression" of the way of life of a group, a tribe, a people. The legacy of European colonialism has rendered the once-haughty metropoles cripplingly sensitive to claims of cultural superiority. The unintended consequence of this development has been a paralyzing incapacity to make significant cultural judgments and distinctions. It is as though the necessary and imperative process of cultural evaluation has been stigmatized as a zero-sum game, and the virtues that are ascribed to one culture accumulate at the expense of other cultures.

For nearly two centuries, France's historical badge of distinction had been the Great Revolution of 1789. This is the heritage that accounts for French "exceptionalism": the obsession with insurrection as a vaunted and permanent feature of the national political imagination. (There is still a metro station in the Parisian suburb of Montreuil named for Robespierre.) For a long time the French idea of liberty was inseparable from the heritage of 1789, which was widely assumed to be a universal political model for export. But during the 1970s, the revolutionary ideal took an indelible hit. For many years, left-wing intellectuals had ardently sought to amalgamate the French and Bolshevik revolutions, with the former purportedly "anticipating" the latter: if such an equivalence existed, then the formal democracy of bourgeois society would ultimately be supplanted by the substantive guarantees of socialist democracy. Yet by the time French intellectuals had succeeded, around the mid-1970s, in making their case, the Jacobin-Bolshevik revolutionary tradition had metamorphosed into an irredeemably negative model—a cautionary tale, a catastrophic paradigm to be avoided at all costs. The publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* and the almost

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simultaneous revelations about Pol Pot's "killing fields"—during the early 1950s, the Khmer Rouge elite had learned the Marxist catechism at the finest Parisian universities—broke the dogma's back.

If, heretofore, the universality of French political culture lay with its revolutionary ideal, that ideal had now become contested, even radioactive. Within a few years' time, what had been a source of immense pride turned for many into a badge of shame. And with the revolutionary model discredited, French intellectuals began hemorrhaging prestige. Inspired by the audacity of Eastern European dissidence, many became converts to the anti-totalitarian standpoint. The price they paid was the loss of their group distinctiveness. Now there was seemingly little that distinguished them from their liberal counterparts in England, the United States, and elsewhere.

Born in 1948, Pascal Bruckner exemplifies the generational trajectory of the '68er. A self-avowed admirer of the left-wing activists who, in May 1968, initiated a general strike that paralyzed France and at one point impelled General de Gaulle to flee, the meditative Bruckner seems to have been more of a bemused onlooker than an active participant. As a critic, he is audacious, insightful, observant, and a master of mellifluous prose. His discursive style runs admirably afoul of the received academic paradigms. He is neither a theorist, nor a philosopher, nor a cultural critic, nor a novelist—at least not exclusively. He is many things in an age of hyper-specialization and academic regimentation, an intellectual virtuoso in an era when the capacity for independent reflection has been usurped by jargon and the space for autonomous thought supplanted by cant.

That Bruckner's talents defy classification might help to account for the relatively understated reception of his work on this side of the Atlantic. This situation is likely to change soon: along with *The Tyranny of Guilt*, Princeton University Press will also publish *Perpetual Euphoria: On the Duty to Be Happy*. Like the great French writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Bruckner excels at multiple genres. His novel *Les Voleurs de beauté*, or *The Beauty Thieves*, which appeared in 1997, won the prestigious Renaudot Prize. In 1992, an earlier novel, *Lunes de fiel* (translated into English as *Evil Angels*), was made into the film *Bitter Moon* by Roman Polanski. Both book and film serve up a dystopian portrait of human intimacy: bleak, sadistic, tortured.

The genre for which Bruckner is best known and most rightly admired is the *essai*. Although it has been extensively imitated in other national literary traditions, the *essai* is, one may safely say, a uniquely French prose form. Bruckner may well be its foremost contemporary practitioner, which is no faint praise. In the *essai*—which is not quite the same as the English "essay," whose aspirations are, as a rule, more modest—a writer takes an individual theme as the basis for a long and wide-ranging meditation, with no nuance or connotation left unexplored. In 1995, one of Bruckner's forays in the genre, *The Temptation of Innocence*, won France's Medici Prize. It is a study of the infantilism of contemporary character structure, the prevalence of the Peter Pan complex, as it were, especially among bobo males. (Valiantly translated into English in 2000 by a small house called Algora Publishing, it provoked few ripples here.)

In addition to being a novelist and an essayist, Bruckner is also a *moraliste*. Here, too, it is important not to be misled by the seductions of the term's English cognate. The moralist's scope is broad, in no way confined to questions of morality. His proper terrain is what the French call *mœurs*, or "mores": the full range of habitudes and customs that make up the *condition humaine* in all of its idiosyncrasy and variety. The moralist must possess perfect pitch when it comes to exposing the infinite variety of human folly. As a stylist, he is constitutionally averse to the leaden *esprit de système*. His wisdom is of the anti-scholastic, worldly, Socratic variety. He is acutely self-conscious of humanity's, and therefore his own, intellectual and moral failings. Given his aversion to speculative pretense, the moralist is something of an intellectual sniper, a perennial deflator of illusion and pomposity. In this respect, Bruckner is the heir to an esteemed French literary tradition dating back to Montaigne and his successors, La Rochefoucauld, La Fontaine, La Bruyère, and Pascal. It was Montaigne who reasserted the virtues of Socratic wisdom ("I only know that I know nothing") by plaintively asking, "*Que sais-je*?": what do I know? He had witnessed the boundless theological hubris that ignited the religious wars that devastated early modern Europe—hence the disabused skepticism that pervades nearly every paragraph of his *Essais*. Bruckner, for his part, experienced his generation's uncritical veneration of the delusions of revolutionism of almost every stripe: Leninist, Trotskyist, Castroist, Maoist. Therein lie, in part at least, the roots of his own thoroughgoing mistrust of human arrogance, of claims to human perfectibility voiced by philosophers and pseudo-philosophers.

II.

In 1983 Bruckner wrote a breakthrough book that nobody—or almost nobody—read. It was called *The Tears of the White Man: Compassion as Contempt*. It was translated into English in 1986, at the second apogee of the Cold War. *The Tears of the White Man* represented an unflinching attempt to come to grips with the conceit of Third Worldism. Eloquently written, meticulously documented, and passionately argued, it was the bearer of tidings that very few people who made their home on the political left wanted to hear. As the dreams of Soviet-style Communism gradually soured, many on the left had transposed their allegiances to revolutionary insurgencies in the Southern Hemisphere: in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. They placed their chips on the virtue and the power of "the wretched of the earth"—a phrase from the Internationale that was immortalized in the title of Frantz Fanon's inordinately influential book of 1961.

Sartre did his share to fan the flames of *tiers-mondisme*, notably in his inflammatory preface to Fanon's already inflamed book. Against the backdrop of decolonization and the Algerian War, he argued that "to shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remain a dead man, and a free man." Sartre's later philosophy was tainted by the link between revolutionary violence and authentic self-realization. In his view, acts of violence committed by the oppressed represent instances of existential self-affirmation: they serve both to eliminate the oppressor and to disrupt the psychology of oppression. In a world where class injustice is rampant, Sartre deemed violence on the part of the oppressed to be inherently "moral," just as colonial violence was intrinsically immoral. Such simplistic oppositions and views became a trademark of Sartre's later "phenomenology of liberation." As late as 1973, at the height of his pro-Chinese phase, Sartre observed crudely that the Jacobin dictatorship failed because its leaders did not kill enough people.

In France, the enticements of Third Worldism proved particularly seductive. The nation had been bloodied by two recent anti-colonial wars, in Indochina and Algeria. The Socialists and the Communists, the mainstays of the institutional

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left, had been discredited by a series of political compromises. Under the leadership of Guy Mollet, the Socialists had taken the lead in trying to suppress the Algerian revolt. For their part, the Communists seemed comfortably ensconced in the compromises of bourgeois parliamentarism: as one of the leading political parties in both the Fourth and Fifth Republics, it was hardly in their interest to rock the boat. And so, for many young people in France, it seemed only logical to go beyond the sclerotic and co-opted radicalism of their elders and fuse their proud indigenous revolutionary tradition with the attractions of Third Worldism. And de Gaulle's disinclination to surrender the reins of power had all the trappings of a benign political dictatorship.

One of Bruckner's great strengths is his uncommon skill for working out the intricate dynamics of generational psychology. He argued that the misplaced wager on Third Worldism was at bottom an act of collective narcissism. The naïve celebrations of anti-colonial liberation movements had less to do with genuine empathy for the lot of the oppressed than with solving the left's political and emotional problems. Such allegiances, in Bruckner's account, had a profoundly delusional quality. Facts and realities ceased to matter, insofar as they threatened to puncture the dreams of a radiant socialist future. What counted most was the ability to sustain the utopian temper, despite the massive countervailing evidence. For the left, it was as though the less it knew about the sanguinary realities of Third World revolutionary struggle, the better—that is, the more effectively those struggles could serve as projections for First World fantasies. As Bruckner observed:

> How is it possible to think about "the Other" when I have no relation to him but through books and other media? The answer is to make him into the personification of an Idea.... Concrete facts were thus swallowed up in an abstraction. Everything became simple, formulaic, and we could steep ourselves in Latin American revolution as easily as in the rampages of the Red Guards. We jumped from one latitude and climate to another, playing with the slogans and ringing declarations. The world was a coat rack upon which we could hang our fantasies. We searched for a more intense and, therefore, more innocent version of ourselves in Angolan soldiers, Bengali Naxalites, and Bolivian guerrillas.
>
> Because we were not lucky enough to be where the action was, we vented our frustrations by rites of imitation, by using sympathetic magic. Beards and berets like Che Guevara's, Mao jackets, a cigar like Castro's and today [1983], an Afghan turban—these were the ultimate declarations of solidarity for many on the Left. On the sidewalks of Berkeley, the boulevards of the Latin Quarter, or the streets of Berlin, wearing such outfits was an attempt to make mere loitering look like the Long March. (If I pretend to be the Other, his victories become my victories.) We remained faithful to the Third World warlords by modeling our appearance after theirs, by trying to act like them. We shook the foundations of the hydra by waving placards carrying pictures of Ho Chi Minh, Arafat, Carmichael, Malcolm X, and Mao. A new kind of fetishism took the place of brotherly imitation, a fetishism whose aim was not so much to find a revolutionary way for France, as to imitate the different rebellious movements of the outside world.

Bruckner was breaking brave new ground with such criticism.

In retrospect, all the pseudo-revolutionary posturing seems to have been little more than an extravagant instance of political playacting. In *The Elusive Revolution*, Raymond Aron aptly described this bizarre political sequence as a generational "psychodrama," with all the leading characters having internalized pre-assigned historical roles. The revolutionary longings of 1789, 1848, 1871, and 1917 re-emerged, only as phantoms: as citation or pastiche. Hence the spectacle of upper-middle-class youth eagerly vying to see who would be the new Saint-Just, the new Louis Blanc, the new Rosa Luxemburg. To his credit, Aron readily admitted that, at the time of the '68 rebellion, he, too, was playing a role: Tocqueville.

But as the 1970s wore on, the reality principle set in and the grandiose revolutionary romanticism of the students dramatically imploded. The massacre of eleven Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972 signified a crucial turning point. The student activists had, in a spirit of left-wing solidarity, routinely supported the Palestinian cause. Several had actually undergone military training at PLO camps based in Jordan. A disproportionate number were Jews who identified profoundly with the resistance and the anti-fascist credo. But the September 1972 massacre cruelly illustrated the perils and the risks of revolutionary theater. The PLO militants had used real bullets. Real blood flowed from the veins of the Israeli athletes. In one tragic instant, many leftists gave up the delusions of revolutionary playacting.

III.

The Tyranny of Guilt is a pendant to *The Tears of the White Man*, and a similarly important book. With twenty years' hindsight, Bruckner reprises a number of the themes of his earlier book. He finds that, among certain left-wing ideologues, the idiom of Western self-hatred persists unabated. As Bruckner avers:

> From existentialism to deconstructionism, all of modern thought can be reduced to a mechanical denunciation of the West, emphasizing the latter's hypocrisy, violence, and abomination.... The whole world hates us, and we deserve it. That is what most Europeans think.... Since 1945 our continent has been obsessed by torments of repentance. Ruminating on its past abominations—wars, religious persecutions, slavery, imperialism, fascism, communism—it views its history as nothing more than a long series of massacres and sackings that led to two world wars, that is, to an enthusiastic suicide.

In reasonable quantities, of course, self-criticism and repentance are praiseworthy: necessary stages in working through a politically or morally compromised past. Yet when indulged in to excess, they can interfere with the sense of reality, and lead to a kind of psychological immobilism. They turn into an unhealthy preoccupation with the past that shuts down the capacity to live fully and honestly and constructively in the present.

Following communism's ignominious demise, the former assemblage of guerrillas and despots—Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Mao—ceased to be serviceable as the potential saviors of humanity, as the political foils to the West's innumerable failings. Hence, in the anti-Western political imagination, the role of the "wretched of the earth" needed to be entirely recast. Bruckner finds that, since September 11, in many instances that role has been filled by representatives of political Islam. Thus Al Qaeda and its allies throughout the Muslim world have been retrofitted as the new freedom fighters: as the new *lumpenproletariat* whose eschatological destiny will be to redeem the West from its own wretchedness.

A crucial prologue to the Western romance with political Islam occurred with the Iranian revolution in 1978, as

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numerous Western intellectuals—most notably Foucault—celebrated the revolt of the mullahs as the extension, and the revival, of a rapidly waning Third Worldism: since the Iranian revolt fused anti-Western, anti-American, and anti-modern elements, it had to end in something politically positive. What a colossal error! Another prominent enthusiast of the marriage between the ultra-left and Islamism was Ilich Ramírez Sánchez—better known as Carlos the Jackal—who, in *Revolutionary Islam* in 2003, confidently proclaims that "Today, confronted by the threat to Civilization, there is a response: revolutionary Islam! Only men and women armed with a total faith in the founding values of truth, justice, and fraternity will be prepared to lead the combat and deliver humanity from the empire of mendacity." Similar sentiments and arguments may be found among radical anti-globalization activists. Relying on the questionable premise that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," they savor the disruptions that Islamic terrorism can sow among champions of the Washington Consensus. They care little for the physical or moral well-being of actual Muslims—women and secular Muslims in particular—who are the most numerous victims of the jihadists. Instead the saga of anti-modernization in the Muslim world is exploited as a pretext for privileged Westerners to settle their own political grievances and scores.

Bruckner is especially insightful, and withering, about the obsessive fixation on the Israeli-Palestinian dispute in the imagination of the contemporary left. He lists the instances of genocide or collective political violence that have in recent years devastated other parts of the globe—ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia; the horrific genocides in Rwanda and Darfur; the seemingly endless civil war in Congo—and notes that they have been greeted, for the most part, with disconcerting equanimity on the part of the anti-humanitarian left, whereas the Israeli-Palestinian conflict never ceases to inflame it. Israeli transgressions are emphatically and histrionically denounced, while the abuses and atrocities perpetrated by Hamas or Hezbollah are routinely extenuated or exonerated as acts of justifiable violence committed in self-defense by an oppressed and desperate people. In France these disputes have been so acrimonious and divisive that, during the presidential election in 2007, many socialists of Jewish background openly declared their partisanship for the center-right candidate and ultimate victor, Nicolas Sarkozy.

Bruckner offers the entirely plausible explanation that, in contemporary France, the Palestinian cause—which, since Hamas's takeover of Gaza in 2005, has been amalgamated with the global struggle of political Islam—remains the last redoubt of old-school '60s *tiers-mondisme*. As he explains:

> The point is that the Palestinians, or rather the mythical idea that people have formed of them, conjoin two elements that promote [hatred of the West]: they are poor compared with a handful of colonizers, some of whom came from Europe, and they are mostly Muslims, that is, members of a religion that part of the Left thinks is the spearhead of the disinherited. That is how this endless conflict became, between 1980 and 2000, and at a time when revolutionary horizons were shrinking, the incontestable cause of a certain orphaned progressivism.

In the enthusiasm for the Palestinian struggle, anti-imperialism, anti-Eurocentrism, liberation theology, and Third World liberationism are all combined.

And anti-Semitism? As Bruckner shows, in a post-Holocaust world a self-assertive Israel makes it possible for a segment of the left-leaning European public to hate Jews in good conscience. When Jews were weak and stateless, they (sometimes) won compassion. With Israelis now perceived as strong—as the aggressors, even as the new Nazis—Europeans are absolved of their post-Shoah guilt and inhibition. Who knows? Perhaps they were right all along to hate the Jews. Moreover, as the nations of Europe have ardently embraced, in the European Union, the terms of a post-national identity, the Jewish state continues to display all the traits of conventional nationalism, thus serving as a constant reminder of a standpoint that Europeans, for understandable historical reasons, would like to escape. (We will see how much longer, though, the post-nationalism of Europe survives the economic crisis.)

Europeans' voluble denunciations of American imperialism—in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere—serve an analogous historical function. Whereas criticisms of specific American policies are certainly merited, the feverish pitch that characterizes such disapprobation suggests there are also deeper motivations at work. As Bruckner suggests, by deploring America's meddlesome geopolitical reach, Europeans are simultaneously justifying their own political fecklessness—in Bosnia, in Chechnya, in Africa, and elsewhere. By the same token, Europeans can conveniently deflect the guilt of their own disreputable colonial past by conveniently blaming their uncouth trans-Atlantic ally and rival. Enlightened Europeans have internalized the lessons of anti-colonialism: why, then, has it taken so long for those incurably provincial Americans to draw similarly correct conclusions? And anti-American *ressentiment* also absolves Europeans from feelings of gratitude or indebtedness to America for having freed Europe—twice!—from the totalitarian yoke: first from fascism, then from communism. Europeans bridle at American self-assertion because it reminds them of what they once were and what, as an amorphous post-national political entity, they can no longer be. Bruckner presciently remarks (*The Tyranny of Guilt* first appeared in France in 2006) that if in the future Vladimir Putin should encroach upon the sovereignty of the Baltic nations—or, say, establish a puppet regime in Moldova or invade Georgia—only the Americans would object.

But Bruckner adds that in their euphoria of self-castigation, Europeans have too readily overlooked their own political achievements: their amazing progress since the horrors of colonialism, the zero-hour of 1945, and the perilous stalemate of the Cold War. As Bruckner observes appositely:

> There is no doubt that Europe has given birth to monsters, but at the same time it has given birth to theories that make it possible to understand and destroy these monsters. Because it has raised the alliance between progress and cruelty, between technological power and aggressiveness, to its highest point since the Conquistadors, because it has engaged for centuries in bloody saturnalia, it has also developed an acute sensibility to the follies of the human species. Taking over from the Arabs and Africans, it instituted the trans-atlantic slave trade, but it also engendered abolitionism and put an end to slavery before other nations did. It has committed the worst crimes and has given itself the means of eradicating them. The peculiarity of Europe is a paradox pushed to the extreme: out of the medieval came the Renaissance; out of feudalism, the aspiration to democracy; and out of the church's repression, the rise of the Enlightenment. The religious

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> wars promoted secularism, national antagonisms promoted the hope of a supranational community, and the revolutions of the twentieth century promoted the antitotalitarian movement. It sent soldiers, merchants, and missionaries to subjugate and exploit distant lands, but it also invented an anthropology that provides a way of seeing oneself from the other's point of view.

How, then, might one surmount the tyranny of European masochism, the ethos of ceaseless self-reproach that in the West threatens to engender a condition of moral and cultural paralysis? For Bruckner, the solution lies in a realistic, non-idealized assessment of the relationship between Self and Other, the West and the non-West. To exalt the Other at one's own expense and to devalue the Self for the Other's sake leads to a doubly distorted perception, a fateful chain of misrecognition whereby Self and Other are equally distorted. But just as self-alienation can become one of the surest paths to self-discovery, so, too, can the Other's difference become an invaluable source of self-knowledge. (In these reflections Bruckner is heavily influenced by Levinas.) The otherness of the Other is an opening onto new, unexplored worlds. It assists me in overcoming my own insularity, in surmounting the confines and constraints of my own ethnocentricity. Respectful, non-idealized knowledge of the Other is one of the surest routes to a cosmopolitan self-understanding: to a modality of self-knowledge that is simultaneously open-minded, pluralistic, and non-dogmatic.

In concrete terms, Bruckner recognizes that one of the West's greatest strengths lies in the inherent reflexivity of its cultural traditions, its time-honored capacity for self-criticism. (To be sure, this is frequently honored in the breach.) In this way, the analysis of the continent's darkest shortcomings has paradoxically led to its regeneration. A new European self-understanding must surmount the twin extremes of self-exaltation and self-hatred. As Bruckner declares, "With regard to Europe we cannot help being insanely in love and insanely indignant.... We must tread a path of vigilant affection, equidistant from suicidal nihilism and self-satisfaction." And so, despite centuries of imperial conquest and internecine atrocity, Europe, in Bruckner's view, were it to live up to its own humanitarian ideals, retains the capacity to serve as the planet's moral compass. Having gained insight into the extreme fragility of human affairs, it must learn to reassert its formidable "civilizing capabilities"—this time, however, as a model of democratic political culture rather than for the ends of colonial dominance.

IV.

In *The Temptation of Innocence*, Bruckner observes that "true old age, that of the spirit ... starts when one is no longer able to communicate with others except by complaints and grumbling." Is this observation a little confessional? For Bruckner's preferred mode, in all his literary forms, has been the jeremiad. Its German variant, perfected by Spengler and like-minded luminaries, is known as *Zivilisationskritik*. Bruckner incessantly laments the infinite modalities of human inauthenticity, our perennial entrapment in disingenuous social commitments and involvements; and this view of the modern condition is not exactly wrong. But it is hardly all we need to know about our situation. Lamentation and rage amount to only a partial standpoint on life. And this restores us, somewhat ironically, to the problem of the '68er.

The generation of 1968 was aflame with millenarian aspirations. The intoxications of total revolution abounded. But, as the 1970s wore on, expectations of a radiant, even utopian future were rudely disappointed, and a deflationary return to cultural and political normality set in. Robust civic-participatory energies were redirected inward. Expressions of cultural radicalism, such as feminism and gay liberation, were reconstituted as tame and rather conformist lifestyle choices. As a result, a type of generational melancholy set in—a spirit of *Kulturpessimismus*. It was sharply captured in 1983 by Gilles Lipovetsky in his influential book *The Era of the Void*, in which he described a generation that sought to transcend the confines of what Adorno called the "totally administered world" of late capitalism but now discovered that the exits and the escape routes were blocked. French intellectuals transferred their allegiances from Marx to Tocqueville, especially the pessimistic Tocqueville of the second volume of *Democracy in America*, who coldly and brilliantly described the leveling process of modern democracy as a sort of implacable fate. According to this view, the *ancien régime*, to its credit, had nurtured social gradations and status differences, thereby producing individuals with firm attachments and strong convictions, whereas democracy, conversely, is an atomistic social condition that softens morals, weakens character, promotes conformity, and discourages excellence. The result of this process is the malady of "democratic individualism."

Bruckner strikes this Tocquevillean tone in one of the many laments (some of them reminiscent of Christopher Lasch) in *The Temptation of Innocence*:

> Our suffering, we other Westerners, is based on relating everything to that negligible unit, that tiny social atom—the individual—armed with only one torch, his freedom, and possessing only one ambition: himself.... The result of this [situation] is that now men resemble each other in the ways that they try to set themselves apart. This desire to dissociate ourselves is precisely what brings us closer, and it is this distance that confirms our conformity. Romantic fascination with exceptional beings—with the insane, the criminal, the genius, the artist, the pervert—stems from our fear of becoming lost in the flock, in the stereotype of the petit bourgeois man. "I am different from the rest." That is the motto of the man of the herd. For the punishment that most hurts the contemporary individual is indifference, rather than imprisonment or repression: counting for nothing, existing only for himself, to remain eternally a "pre-someone."

In Bruckner's view, mass society, in its modern welfare-state variant, dominated as it is by a mentality of entitlement, has become little more than a "culture of complaint." (It was Robert Hughes who first coined that withering phrase.) But—here is a concrete example of the limitations of Bruckner's negativism—can the welfare state really be reduced to a mentality of entitlement? Aren't there considerations of justice and decency that it also fulfills?

Bruckner does not see that with his single-minded focus on the varieties of cultural decline, he veers perilously close to becoming a part of the whining, the all-pervasive masochism, that he otherwise deplores. He spends too much time philosophizing in a lachrymose mode, bemoaning democracy's dereliction, complaining about people who complain. As such, his perspective on modern democracy is too univocal and dismissive. He perceives only decay and disintegration. This approach vitiates his otherwise praiseworthy critique of *tiers-mondisme*, which is best denounced precisely in the name of democracy and our open societies.

Not all forms of democratic self-individuation, moreover, are chimerical

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and inauthentic. Bruckner unaccountably neglects the countervailing democratic energy that results in what Kant called "autonomy"—the individual's emergence from self-incurred tutelage—and what Hegel identified as "progress in the consciousness of freedom." Modern individualism is less flaccid and one-dimensional than Bruckner would have us believe. It is certainly susceptible to the easy blandishments of mass consumption and cultural banality. But it also offers unprecedented prospects for individual and collective self-determination—prospects that under the *ancien régime* did not exist except for a privileged few. Insofar as cultural attachments cease to be inexorably predetermined by the ties of place, family, status, and class, persons are able to individuate themselves—to form unique, self-chosen identities—in a more autonomous and self-directed manner; and this unshackling permits a broadening and enrichment of personality structure, a transformation that would have been unthinkable in more traditional status-based or class-based societies. Thus, the news about democratic culture is far from all bad. A lot has been lost, but hardly all.

Bruckner is a bold and eloquent and important thinker, but at times one wonders whether his anti-democratic lamentations are not more the manifestation of a peculiarly French cultural disorientation than an accurate description of the democratic condition or the human condition. Since communism's collapse, France has struggled to redefine its mission in Europe and in the world, but its room for maneuver is exasperatingly circumscribed. French intellectuals have also sought to reformulate their *raison d'être*, but in the postcolonial era, when the universalism of both the Revolution and the *mission civilisatrice* has been called into question, these efforts, too, have been permeated by uncertainty and gloom. It is a paradoxical situation, for the rich indigenous resources of the French philosophical and literary tradition—from Montaigne to Descartes, from Voltaire to Zola—offer more than ample sustenance for thinking one's way through, and out of, the present crisis. ◆

Oren Harman
INFINITE LIFE

NAMING INFINITY: A TRUE STORY OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM AND MATHEMATICAL CREATIVITY
By Loren Graham and Jean-Michel Kantor
(Belknap Press, 239 pp., $25.95)

A STARRY FIRMAMENT, or sand cascading through one's open fingers, or weeds springing up time after time: the first conception of infinity, of the uncountable and the unending, is not recorded, but it must have been stimulated by experiences such as these. It may have merged in the mind of an ancient progenitor with thoughts of a God, a possessor of unlimited might, an infinite being itself. But whether or not the idea of God was born with the first thoughts of what cannot be counted, this wonderful book by an American historian of science and a French mathematician teaches us that eons later, the divine and the infinite remain closely entangled. A mathematical understanding of infinity was a conundrum for rationalists, who believed it could be mastered by using only the methods of scientific logic, unsullied by eschatology or religion. But as Jean-Michel Kantor and Loren Graham show, they were wrong. Centuries after Bacon and Descartes, and the birth of the scientific method of the moderns, mysticism came to the rescue of one of the most intractable problems posed by abstract human thought. It was mysticism, not rationalism, that helped to crack infinity.

In the sixth century B.C.E. Anaximander of Miletus gave a name to the infinite, calling the indeterminate, or "something without bound, form, or quality," *apeiron*. But limitlessness, and non-rationality, and ineffability were all descriptions of what infinity was not. The closest anyone came for centuries to a positive definition was "potentiality" as opposed to "actuality," in the influential terms of Aristotle. But this formulation did little to help define the indefinable. Even Galileo, nearly two thousand years later, bowed his weighty head before the limitless. Contemplating the series of infinite integers (1,2,3,4…) and the series of infinite even numbers (2,4,6,8…), he gave up: clearly both could continue without limit, and yet wasn't one precisely one half as large as the other?

Already around Galileo's time mathematicians were giving names to the unthinkable. The word "absurd" was first used in English in 1557 to describe the product of 8-12 (or -4), since the word "surd," meaning deaf or silent, had become known as the name for an irrational square root (expressing the coiner of the term's attitude toward what it named). Symbols such as x and y, powers and roots, slowly rendered philosophical impossibilities into algebraic necessities: if $x^2 = 2$ helped solve certain problems, then $\sqrt{2}$ no longer seemed all that crazy. If $x^2 = -1$ somehow surfaced through manipulation, then $\sqrt{-1}$ was no longer unthinkable. In fact, the square root of negative one was soon termed an "imaginary" number: the name may have expressed a sense of incredulity, but it made the "imaginary" real.

Georg Cantor, the promising son of a successful St. Petersburg merchant who had moved his family to Germany, completed his studies in Berlin and Göttingen in 1869, and become a lecturer at the University of Halle, brought a new urgency to the problem of infinity. In fact, he soon learned, it was the problem not of infinity but of infinities, for (as Galileo had perceived) not all infinities are the same. Galileo, it turned out, had been mistaken: the series of infinite integers and the series of infinite even numbers were the same kind of infinity. Each term in one "set" ("every Many," Cantor defined a set in 1883, "that can be thought of as One") could be matched by a term in the other. What Cantor found by way of inventing set theory was that there were different powers, or cardinalities, to different sets of infinities.

Often kids try counting to infinity to resist falling asleep. They never make it. But Cantor counted to infinity and kept on going: there was the smallest countable infinity plus one, the smallest countable infinity plus two, the smallest countable infinity plus three, and so on. Then there was the smallest uncountable infinity, like points on a line from zero to one—called the "Continuum"—followed by the next-to-smallest uncountable infinity plus one, and so on. Cantor had created an entire universe of infinities by giving each different kind of set a name. Could he fit a set of infinity between the countable infinities and

Oren Harman's new book, THE PRICE OF ALTRUISM: GEORGE PRICE AND THE SEARCH FOR THE ORIGINS OF KINDNESS, has just been published by Norton.

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the uncountable ones? Were infinities like a smooth river or were they empty spaces, like the swaths of dark empyrean between sparkling white stars? This was the Continuum Hypothesis, and Cantor would spend the rest of his life trying unsuccessfully to prove it. Gradually he lost his mind, coming to believe that God, the set of all sets, had revealed set theory to him, and that all the sets he talked about existed preformed in God's own mind. After the winter of 1902, he was in and out of the *Nervenklinik*, helplessly battling an infinity of madness.

Rocking in the belly of the Imperial Russian Navy ship as it sailed, in June 1913, through sparkling Aegean waters toward the Monastery of St. Pantaleimon on Mount Athos, the Archbishop Nikon of Vologda braced himself. He was determined. Even before hermits in the deserts of Palestine practiced the "Prayer of the Heart" in the fourth century, Christianity had known mystical sects. Later called hesychast monks from the Greek *hesychia*, or stillness, such mystics had believed in the power of glossalia, or "praying without ceasing," with control of breathing and the heartbeat, to reach union with God. Already in the fourteenth century Gregory Palamas, a Constantine monk, had settled on Mount Athos preaching hesychasm as a true alternative to the staid rationalism of Byzantine Christianity. Now, in modern times, to the great consternation of leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church, a Russian monk named Ilarion had instituted the "Jesus Prayer" among his followers ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"—sometimes shortened to "Lord Jesus Christ," or just "Jesus"—repeated over and over again), a prayer considered heretical for harking back to mystical times. Ilarion admitted that when reciting the prayer worshippers needed to be careful. There were three "stages of immersion"—the oral, the mental, and finally the "Prayer of the Heart": if one jumped between them prematurely, warm blood could descend to the lower parts of the body and lead to sexual arousal. Archbishop Nikon of Vologda clenched his fists.

The last thing Nicholas II wanted was for bickering monks to invite an invasion of the Greek army into the monastery; the czar didn't care much about the theological dispute, but he was not about to lose a Russian protectorate in the Aegean. Later, after the gunboat *Donets* had lowered its anchor and Russian marines stormed the monastery with clubs, water hoses, and bayonets, each side would claim a different story. Whether monks were brutally murdered, soldiers were beaten, or only a small number of fanatics were rather quietly subdued didn't in the end really matter: after all, nearly a thousand monks were hauled back on the ships to Russia, where their leadership was thrown in jail, and the rest were defrocked and banished to far-off provinces. The Name Worshippers of Mount Athos had been shut down. What mattered most were the defiant interruptions to the angry sermon of Archbishop Nikon of Vologda, who had marched into the monastery courtyard behind the troops. "You mistakenly believe that names are the same as God," his voice trembled. "But I tell you that names, even of divine beings, are not God themselves." Corralled, water-drenched, their arms twisted violently behind their backs, the monks would not be silenced. "*Imia Bozhie* est' *sam Bog*!" some of them were clearly heard shouting, their eyes alight. "The Name of God *is* God!"

Few knew at the time that the events on Mount Athos would soon play a role in cracking the mysteries of infinity, least of all Henri Poincaré, France's premier mathematician. Back on the mainland, Poincaré was aghast at Cantor's sets. "The higher infinities," Graham and Kantor quote him, "have a whiff of form without matter, which is repugnant to the French spirit." Reared in the tradition of Descartes, Frenchmen knew better. Mathematics was a close cousin of physics. It dealt with things like triangles and populations and planets that could be counted and touched. It related to *this* world. Over their dead bodies would it be defiled by abstract philosophy.

And yet when Poincaré's German rival, David Hilbert, gave the opening address at the Second International Congress of Mathematics in Paris back in 1900, he presented a brash challenge to his French hosts. At the top of a list of twenty-three fundamental mathematical problems that had yet to be solved, he placed the scourge that had driven Cantor to his wit's end: the Continuum Hypothesis. Three young French mathematicians sitting in the crowd couldn't help but get excited: the person who would solve the mathematical world's greatest challenge would win eternal fame and instant celebrity.

Émile Borel, the eldest of the three, had taught the other two at the École Normale Supérieure. He was a Parisian socialite "consumed with all possible experience," and would become director of the École, publisher of the *Revue du mois* (crucial to the birth of the Radical Left), mayor of his hometown, minister of the navy, an activist in the French Resistance, a prisoner of the Gestapo, and a winner of innumerable prizes. René Baire was the son of a tailor, whom a childhood acquaintance described as "a big fellow with an obviously weak bone structure, a wan complexion, and dark deep eyes that tended to stare in a disturbing manner." And Henri Lebesgue, the son of a widowed seamstress, sported (according to Borel's wife) a "malicious smile under a reddish moustache" and a pince-nez. All three were brilliant and ambitious. And each tackled the problem of infinity.

The challenge proved extreme. Already in 1901 Bertrand Russell pointed out a paradox in Cantor's thinking: how could one countenance the set of all sets that do not belong to themselves? The paradox was maddening. So was the following definition of a number, published in 1905 by Jules Richard, a professor of mathematics from Dijon: "Consider the smallest number not definable in English in less than twenty words." (Richard had just defined it in thirteen words.) Cantor himself had introduced pluralities too big to be sets so as to skirt such contradictions, calling them "Absolutes" and identifying them with God. At stake was the very reality of numbers, the ontology of mathematics: if giving names to sets of infinity led to unthinkable paradoxes, or to God, perhaps the sets of infinity were nothing but imaginary creations, impudent slaps in the face to the touchable and real. Weighed down by their Cartesian tradition, wary of losing themselves in a forest of abstraction, the three Frenchmen in the end could walk no further. Embittered, Lebesgue pulled back from his earlier intrepid sojourns into the abstract, breaking off a deep friendship with his former teacher. Wary of the mental consequences of such research, Borel simply gave up, turning to probability and statistics; "not much" compared to his earlier work, he wrote to his wife, but useful. And Baire's lot was bleaker. Crippled by financial troubles, neurosis, and depression, he eventually committed suicide in 1932, alone in a hotel on Lake Geneva.

If the French sought to purge mathematics of philosophy, the Russians were just the opposite. Continuous functions are functions where small changes in the input result in small

ANTHONY RUSSO

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changes in the output; discontinuous functions are functions where this is not so. But to Nikolai Bugaev, professor of mathematics at Moscow University, they were much more than that. Speaking at the First International Congress of Mathematics in Zurich in 1897, he explained that discontinuous functions represent humanity's escape from fatalism, manifestations of "independent individuality and autonomy," protectors of "aesthetic" freedom. "Monsters," one French mathematician called them, but Bugaev insisted. Discontinuity strengthened man's moral fiber.

And so it wasn't all that surprising that one of Bugaev's brightest students should have developed a deep interest in the connection between mathematics and religion. Dmitri Egorov had spent 1902–1903 in Europe, where he had studied with some of the greatest mathematicians of the age, including Lebesgue. Back in Moscow, he married the daughter of one of Russia's most famous violinists, Ivan Grzhimali, and settled into a comfortable life of lavish entertaining: Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Ilya Repin. Still, Egorov was a reserved and deeply religious man; friends saw him dutifully kiss the hands of priests lurking around his home.

At Moscow University, Egorov had two outstanding students. Nikolai Luzin, the grandson of a serf, nurtured a strong belief in the liberating power of science, a hope that philosophical materialism would make the world a better place some day. Pavel Florensky, on the other hand, the son of a railroad engineer from Yevlakh in present-day Azerbaijan, had just recently converted to religious faith following a revelation. Influenced by Bugaev, he became convinced that intellectually the nineteenth century had been a disaster. The culprit was continuous thinking, the notion that all transitions from one point to the next need to pass through all the intermediates. Mathematics, in fact, had been responsible for the atrocity, the "determinism" of differential functions having seeped into Lyell's and Darwin's gradualism in geology and evolution, into psychology and sociology, and worst of all, into the latest plague—Marxism. Thankfully Georg Cantor had at last challenged continuity, presenting his Continuum as a "mere set of points" rather than a dogmatic directed line. Now mutation in biology, electrons jumping orbitals in physics, and subliminal consciousness in psychology were all following suit. Humanity could finally graduate to higher places.

When the attempt at revolution was beaten down in 1905, Luzin suffered a mental breakdown; the trauma of the brutality had shaken his positivist aspirations to their core. Hoping that he might gain his balance abroad, Egorov sent his brilliant student to Paris to meet, among others, Lebesgue and Borel. "To see the misery of the people," Luzin wrote home to his friend Florensky, who had since entered the Theological Academy, "to see the torment of life. . . .—this is an unbearable sight. . . . I cannot live by science alone. . . . If I do not find a path to seek the truth . . . I will not go on living." Florensky replied that agnosticism and atheism were responsible for Russia's chaos and confusion, and invited Luzin to stay near him in his monastery town. It was there that Luzin read his friend's thesis "On Religious Truth," and instantly abandoned all thoughts of suicide. He had caught a glimmer of a path to truth, an "intuitive-mystical understanding," and Florensky had been his guide. "I owe my interest in life to you," he wrote to him.

Throwing himself into set theory back in Moscow, Luzin maintained strong ties with Florensky, and here is where the escapades of the monks of the Aegean return to our story. It is not clear precisely when both men first learned of Name Worshipping, but already in 1906 they enjoyed calling each other by names other than their own. When news of the rebellion on Mount Athos reached Russia in 1913, Florensky spoke up publicly in its favor, and befriended monks who had endured firsthand the navy's brutal

The Smokestack

The town had a smokestack.
It had a church spire.
The church was prettier,
but the smokestack was higher.

It was a lone ruined column,
a single snuffed taper,
a field gun fired at heaven,
a tube making vapor.

The smoke thinned the attention.
Its aspect kept transforming.
It could look like a cloud, or like
mosquitoes swarming.

The smokestack's bricks were yellow,
and its mouth, twenty feet wide.
Its smoke was usually pale,
but there was a rust color on its side.

The smoke was yellow coral,
a bouquet of yellow roses,
a yellow beard, a yellow eye,
and also runny noses.

Often it looked heavy
like junipers under snow.
At dawn it was limpidly pink
and shaped like an embryo.

It could look like Cuba
as seen from outer space.
It could look like a pedestal stone.
It could look like Jesus' face.

The busy residents
tended to ignore it,
though no one alive
remembered a time before it.

Sometimes it looked like ermine,
sometimes like elderflower.
Sometimes it looked like a Persian cat,
and sometimes like power.

It came before Lincoln Steffens.
It survived Eric Blair.
It was older than stop signs.
It would always be there,

resembling a tuxedo ruffle,
or an elephant head,
or a balled-up blanket
on a hospital bed.

It stopped three times a year,
but only for one day.
Once, in the '30s, it seemed to die.
Many families went away.

But it stayed dead a week,
and when it was resurrected,
the sky turned black, and then white,
as if a new pope were elected.

To labor it looked like a witness,
to management a snitch,
to both victim and perpetrator
it looked like getting rich.

At the Chamber of Commerce,
on a postcard of the square,
you'd find it in the background,
diminutive but there.

On cool summer evenings,
it billowed like azure silk.
On cold winter mornings,
it spread like spilled milk.

JOSHUA MEHIGAN

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attack on St. Pantaleimon. Soon two worlds were becoming entwined. Lebesgue had asked whether a mathematical object could exist without defining (meaning naming) it, and now the answer was becoming clear. Just as naming God via glossolalian repetition was a religious act that brought the deity into existence, so naming sets via increasingly recursive definitions was a mathematical act that conferred a reality in the world of numbers. Cantor and before him the ancient Neoplatonists had shown the way, but this was only the beginning. Infused with mysticism, Florensky believed, new forms of mathematics and religion were being born, ones that by rejecting determinism would rescue mankind from catastrophe. In both cases—God and infinity—the key to bringing abstractions into reality was bestowing upon them a name.

Before long, Egorov was onboard. He was blown away by his former student Florensky's thesis, now published as a book, *The Pillar and Foundation of Truth*. Joining hands with Luzin, he formed an inner circle within the faculty of mathematics at Moscow University, and young brilliants, even very young ones, flocked from across the nation to study sets. Never mind the university rule that when classroom temperature dropped below freezing, teaching was canceled: the hungry brights bundled up, put pencil to paper, and paid no heed. With the revolution underway, massive purges hit the campus; idealism and religion had to be kept under the slide rule. But the outside danger fit the inner edge, unwittingly making things all the more exciting. The friends comprised a kind of secret order, and its name was "Lusitania." In the inner circle no one called each other by their regular name. Each member was assigned an aleph of infinity, with breakthroughs and insights bestowing a higher cardinality. New recruits were $\aleph_0$, Luzin $\aleph_{17}$, and Egorov $\aleph_\omega$—the highest regular infinite before the Continuum. By this time Egorov was already a devout Name Worshipper: in his mind the mystery of numbers and the mystery of God had entirely merged through the power of the name.

On one occasion the group traveled by train to Petrograd for a scientific meeting, proceeding to invent appellations for nearly everything: "Commandant of the Carriage" for the student assigning compartments to the passengers; "Pegasus' Stable" for the carriage carrying the bachelors; "the Lazaretto" for the host city's Academy of Sciences. This was playful mischief, but behind it lurked a serious creed. To name was to individualize, to give existence, to create. Abstraction was a friend, not an enemy. Already, the approach was paying dividends: one way to tackle the Continuum Hypothesis was to try to imagine subsets of the continuum. Pavel Alexandrov, a student otherwise known as $\aleph_5$, had shown that a family of subsets known as B-sets, after Borel, satisfied the hypothesis—an advance Borel himself had failed to realize. But it was a discovery of another student, Mikhail Suslin, that really made headway. Lebesgue, it transpired, had made a mistake in a seminal paper. B-sets were not the only subset of the Continuum, not even by far. In fact it was possible to name a whole new hierarchy of subsets. "It was as if sets, of kinds not known before," Graham and Kantor write, "were emerging from a secret cavern." Infinity was slowly revealing its deepest catacombs.

Led by teachers who had become mystics, the Moscow School was making the greatest breakthroughs since Cantor. Realism had forced the Frenchmen to recoil, but a blend of philosophical Platonism and ancient glossolalian theology was now the Russians' solution to the problem. The chants of the monks of Mount Athos had begun to do their magic.

The Continuum Hypothesis has never been proved, and it might never be. Still, the Russian School had its day of glory. Tragically, it was a short one. After the revolution, attacks on religion and non-Marxists grew. Soon Florensky was arrested. Courageously delivering scientific papers wearing a white priest's cassock, he was found to be a pernicious contradiction in terms: a "priest-professor," "an extreme right-wing monarchist," a member of a "counterrevolutionary party." Never mind that Florensky had never heard of The Party for the Rebirth of Russia, of which he was accused of being a leader. Ultimately he broke under torture, confessed to made-up crimes, and was shipped away to a hard labor camp on the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea in the Arctic. He was shot on December 8, 1937, twenty miles south of Leningrad.

Luzin, too, soon felt the infernal breath of the Communist Party. Even the sanitarium could not save him. Lusitania had disbanded, and a number of jealous former students and careerist adversaries recognized the opportunity. "Unmasked" in *Pravda*, Luzin was accused of treason by a special investigative commission of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Alongside the charge of "wrecking" (which included publishing his best articles unpatriotically in French) was the allegation of an "inability to understand the unity of continuous and discrete." Only a merciful letter from the Nobel physicist Peter Kapitsa to Stalin seems to have saved him: even Newton, Kapitsa pleaded, had been a "religious maniac." Miraculously, Luzin's life was spared, but after 1936 he abandoned foreign publications and religion, and was never the same man again.

Luzin's star student, Lev Schnirelmann, who had arrived years earlier at Lusitania when he was fifteen, wide-eyed and in love with sets, took his life in a Moscow apartment following his interrogation in 1938. Luzin's student and lover, Nina Bari, jumped before an oncoming train years later. But it was the giant Egorov's fate that was saddest of all. As the purges intensified, the revered father of the Moscow School of mathematics soon found himself betrayed by students and friends. Collecting all his dignity, he refused to back down, and was soon exiled to a prison near Kazan. Heartbroken, beaten, wasting away, $\aleph_\omega$ died a torturous death. His last words were: "Save me, O God, by Thy name!"

Lusitania and its heroes are a salutary lesson in the ways religious and mystical thought can prove unexpectedly valuable in science. Graham and Kantor do a good job of balancing these lessons, cautioning against determinism and overplay. Still, the story of Baire and Lebesgue, of Luzin and Florensky, poses a challenge to the more pristine pretensions of reason. It reminds us that the roads to knowledge are many, and that no single way can claim to be the only way.

Contemplating his own life, begging his wife to take him home from the sanitarium in one of his last letters, Georg Cantor, the muse of the Name Worshipping mathematical mystics, wrote:

> That was a winter cold and wild,
> Like none one can recall;....
>
> Cold would my winter have been;
> To suffer gladly, pen a poem,
> To escape the world I'm in.

He died alone, in the spring of 1917. Understanding what lies beyond the beyond is a problem that demands extraordinary talent, perhaps even genius. But as *Naming Infinity* so sensitively shows, escaping the world we live in, and the exacting parameters of reason, can sometimes lead to surprising results. As powerful as the gift of rationalism may be, there is still more in heaven and earth. ◆

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Washington Diarist

Faces and Faiths

Is there any more eloquent or definitive evidence of human individuality, of human dignity, than the face? My face shows that I am unlike you, that I am myself; and in this beautiful incommensurability we establish solidarity with each other, because your face also looks only like itself, only like you. The hiddenness of the face—the Divine face, too—is commonly regarded as a curse or a punishment, and its revelation as an epiphany. This is certainly the case in the mystagogic morality of Levinas, for whom the sight of the face is "a visitation," "the first disclosure," "a bareness without any cultural ornament": "the face enters our world from an absolutely foreign sphere, that is, precisely from an absolute," and so it signifies "a command." Where the face is covered, ethics cannot exist. I have been pondering all this again on the occasion of "the bill to forbid covering one's face in public," or the anti-burqa measure recently passed by the National Assembly in France. It has been defended on grounds of human rights. France, declared its minister of justice, "does not accept attacks on human dignity. It does not tolerate the abuse of vulnerable people." Uh-huh. I confess that I am watching the French struggle with the distinction between Islam and Islamism—I mean the French who are struggling with it at all—with a certain malicious delight. Is the distinction really so slippery? When did France become the homeland of *l'Autre*, naturally tolerant and welcoming to cultures unlike its own? (The philosophy of Levinas was, among other things, a prophetic castigation of France.) And the same question may be asked of other European societies whose suspicion of, or hostility to, the Muslims in their midst has a foul familiar air. Otherness is the challenge that Europe never mastered. (I apologize for the gross historical generalization, but I have been immersed in Jordi Savall's monumental reconstruction in music of the Cathars and their destruction.) And now, to fight Islamism in France, the power of the state, the frightened state, is being used to forbid the free practice of religion. It is of course shocking to encounter a person in a burqa, as it is to encounter a person tattooed from head to toe: it is a mutilation of personhood. But by what right does the state intervene? If some Muslim women are forced into their hideous sartorial prison, the state will not relieve them, and the Muslim men who are solicitous of their humanity, of the need to dissent and to rebel—of the rupture of modernization, which can only occur within, as it did in Christianity and Judaism; and if many Muslim women cover themselves consensually, the state should leave them be. Intolerance is a poor security policy. Moreover, the face is not all it's cracked up to be. The face may be manifest but deceptive, and no disclosure at all; or it may disclose anger and hatred and violence. A visible face may be more dangerous than an invisible one. I am thinking of nineteen faces in particular.

The French state is not the only state that is trampling upon religious liberty. So is the Jewish state. And the religious liberty being violated belongs not to the Other, but to the Same. Or more precisely, the Rotem bill that would secure the control of the Chief Rabbinate over all conversions to Judaism represents a denial that Reform and Conservative Jews are indeed the Same, and their banishment to the perdition of the Other. Many critics have rightly observed that the success of such a measure would lead to schism in the Jewish world, and bitterly alienate the Jewish diaspora from the Jewish state; and Netanyahu has rightly vowed not to allow this monstrosity to become law. But the thwarting of Rotem is not the end of the matter. There is a larger problem for my Reform and Conservative brothers and sisters. The problem is the very existence of the Chief Rabbinate. It is a poisonous institution. It has diminished Judaism into an apparatus of the state and conflated it with power and patronage. It disguises low politics with high theology. Its resort to coercion in matters of belief is a mark of spiritual emptiness. In its outrageous pretension to central religious authority, it is a deeply unJewish office that would abolish the local and improvisatory and variegated character of Jewish religious life since the Sanhedrin. The Chief Rabbinate was not created by God at Sinai; it was created by the attorney general of the British mandatory government in Palestine. Many of its occupants (though not the one who was my cousin, of course) have been intellectually mediocre. It has become the most powerful instrument of the takeover of Orthodoxy by the ultra-Orthodox, who grow wilder and more insular all the time: they prefer the Torah without Jews to the Jews without Torah, and their lack of compassion for anyone but themselves is sinister. Worst of all, the Chief Rabbinate solves nothing: if it did not exist, the legal and denominational perplexities of Jewish life after the era of religious reform—the rupture, again—would still be with us. Two hundred years ago this week, in the town of Seesen, in Westphalia, "Jacob's Temple," a synagogue with a bell tower and an organ, was dedicated with a German chorale and a sermon about universal brotherhood—and there is nothing that any of the holy beards in Jerusalem can do about it. *This* is the actually existing Jewish people. Insofar as the ultras in Israel do not believe in religious liberty, they are at odds with the state in which they live, whose Declaration of Independence "guarantees full freedom of religion [and] conscience"; and insofar as politicians in Israel pander to them and play their sordid games, they, too, are in defiance of first principles. "Laws do not alter convictions; arbitrary punishments and rewards produce no principles, refine no morals. Fear and hope are no criteria of truth. Knowledge, reasoning, and persuasion alone can bring forth principles." Those Jeffersonian words were not written by Jefferson. They were written by an observant Jew in Dessau, in the most neglected classic of the Enlightenment, and the greatest Jewish contribution to it. Moses Mendelssohn established this wisdom in *Jerusalem, or on Religious Power and Judaism*, in 1783. In one of the more sublime coincidences of history, he was composing these reflections at precisely the time when Jefferson, a world and a culture away, was preparing his own argument, in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, that "[i]t is error alone which needs the support of government. Truth can stand by itself." The rabbis Mendelssohn and Jefferson.

Leon Wieseltier

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Deadly Threat of a Nuclear-Armed Iran

What can the world, what can the USA, what can Israel do about it?

Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has declared publicly – not once, but repeatedly – that Israel must be "wiped off the map." That effort, the destruction of Israel, seems to be the main goal of Iranian policy. When Iranian missiles are paraded through the streets of Tehran, the destination "to Jerusalem" is clearly stenciled on them.

What are the facts?

A death wish for Israel. Ahmadinejad and the ayatollah who is the "supreme leader" have publicly mused that one or two nuclear bombs would obliterate Israel, but that, though it would cause devastating damage and millions of casualties, Iran would survive Israel's retaliatory attack. Iran is a huge country, with about 60 million inhabitants, so they are probably correct. And who can doubt that those religious fanatics would not hesitate to allow the destruction of much of their country and to sacrifice a third or even one-half of their population in order to eliminate the hated Jewish state? When our country was entangled with the Soviet Union in the bitter 40-year long "cold war," with both sides having sufficient nuclear weapons to destroy the opponent's country and its people, things were kept in place by MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction. However "evil" the leaders of the Soviet Union (the "Evil Empire") may have been, there was one great consolation and assurance: They were not crazy. But the Iranians and other Muslims are crazies, as we understand the concept. Because they take instructions directly from Allah, who tells them to kill the Jews and other infidels, whatever the cost.

> "An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of "anticipatory self-defense," recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense."

Israel has no problem with Iran. They share no borders and have no territorial dispute. In fact, they face common Arab enemies and should be natural allies, as they indeed were under the Shah. Iran's death wish for Israel is based entirely on religious fanaticism. In contrast even to the intractable North Koreans, the determination of the Iranians is immutable. It cannot be changed by persuasion, by diplomacy, by sanctions or by threats.

Once Iran is in possession of nuclear weapons, it will not only be a deadly danger to Israel, but to all of the Middle East and to virtually all of Europe. The flow of oil from the Middle East, the lifeblood of the industrialized world, would be totally under its control and so would be the economies of all nations of the world, very much including the United States.

What is to be done? In 1981, then prime minister of Israel Menachem Begin, being aware of Iraq's nuclear ambitions and looming realization of those ambitions, decided that its nuclear reactor at Osiraq had to be destroyed. The IAF (Israeli Air Force) accomplished that in a daring and unprecedented raid. Iraq's nuclear capability was eliminated in one stroke, never to rise up again. Israel had done the world an enormous service. Had it not been for Israel's decisive action, the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait and, without question, also of Saudi Arabia and its enormous oil fields, and, for that matter, of Iran, could not have been prevented. Saddam Hussein would have been the ruler of the world.

The solution to the deadly threat that Iran poses to the world is obvious. Of course, diplomacy and persuasion, threats and promises, sticks and carrots – every possible means short of military action – should be used until it becomes clear even to the most obdurate that nothing can deviate Iran from its chosen path of becoming a nuclear power and to dominate the Middle East.

There is reason to believe that the people of Iran, especially the young people, oppose the oppressive and theocratic regime of their country and are hostile to the mullahs who control everything. But the government has the tools of power firmly in its hands. It controls the instruments of coercion – it can kill people and it controls the oil money. While it would be most desirable and in the interest of the world to be able to foment an overthrow of the Iranian regime, that is an unrealistic and unattainable prospect.

Regrettably, there is only one solution to the terrible dilemma confronting the world, the unacceptable danger of a nuclear-armed Iran. The terror, the destruction and the 60 million dead of World War II could have been prevented at several times during the Nazi regime. But the Allied powers, under the leadership of Britain's prime minister Neville Chamberlain, opted for appeasement and for "peace in our time." We cannot afford to make that same mistake again. The world must give Iran an ultimatum: Desist immediately from the development of nuclear weapons; if you do not, we shall destroy the facilities that produce them. There still is a window of opportunity to do that. That window may close very soon. But who would do the job? The United States would be the obvious choice. But if the United States were in accord, Israel could do it, just as it did the job in 1981 in destroying Iraq's nuclear potential once and for all.

An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of "anticipatory self-defense," recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense. Nobody really knows for sure how far Iran is from reaching its goal — six months. six years? The experts disagree. But if Iran is not stopped now, it may well be too late not very long from now.

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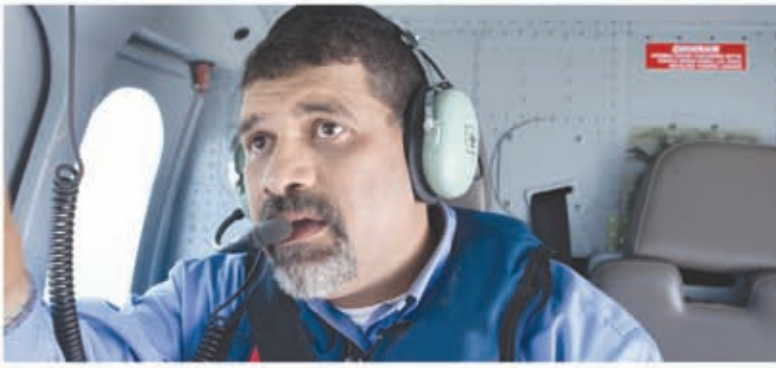

Making This Right

Beaches
Claims
Cleanup
Economic Investment
Environmental Restoration
Health and Safety
Wildlife

I grew up on the Gulf Coast. I know these waters. And I'm doing everything I can to clean them up. - Fred Lemond, BP Cleanup Operations

BP has taken full responsibility for the cleanup in the Gulf. And that includes keeping you informed.

Searching For And Cleaning Up The Oil
Every morning, over 50 spotter planes and helicopters search for oil off the coast, heading to areas previously mapped with satellite imagery and infrared photography. Once oil is found, they radio down to the 6,000 ships and boats of all sizes that are supporting the cleanup effort and working to collect the oil. These are thousands of local shrimping and fishing boats organized into task forces and strike teams, plus specialized skimmers mobilized from as far as the Netherlands.

We have recovered more than 27 million gallons of oil-water mixture from the Gulf. Other methods have also helped remove millions of additional gallons of oil from the water. We've deployed more than 8 million feet of boom to protect beaches and sensitive wildlife areas.

Hurricane Preparedness
In the event of a hurricane, our first priority is keeping people safe. In coordination with the Coast Guard and local officials, we may suspend operations temporarily but have organized to resume them as soon as possible.

Our Responsibility
We have already spent more than $3.2 billion responding to the spill and on the cleanup, and none of this will be paid by taxpayers. We will work in the Gulf as long as it takes to get this done. We may not always be perfect but we will do everything we can to make this right.

For information visit: bp.com
restorethegulf.gov
facebook.com/bpamerica
twitter.com/bp_america
youtube.com/bp

For assistance, please call:
To report oil on the shoreline: (866) 448-5816
To report impacted wildlife: (866) 557-1401
To make spill-related claims: (800) 440-0858

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